BODY OF DIVINITY

BY
DR JOHN GILL

BOOK I

Of the being and Attributes of God

A MODERNISED AND REVISED EDITION

Carefully prepared in clear modern English while preserving the theological terminology, doctrinal precision, and King James Scripture quotations of the original eighteenth-century work.

PREPARED BY
DAVID CLARKE

BODY OF DIVINITY

BY

DR JOHN GILL

BOOK I

A MODERNISED AND REVISED EDITION

Carefully prepared in clear modern English while preserving the theological terminology, doctrinal precision, and King James Scripture quotations of the original eighteenth-century work.

PREPARED BY

DAVID CLARKE

Published by Bierton Particular Baptists

First Revised Edition

Prepared and Published by David Clarke

11 Hayling Close

Fareham

Hampshire

PO14 3AE

www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

ABOUT THIS REVISED EDITION

The writings of Dr John Gill remain among the most substantial and carefully reasoned theological works ever produced within the Calvinistic Baptist tradition. Yet for many modern readers, the older forms of English, lengthy sentence structures, and literary style of the eighteenth century can make sustained reading difficult, especially for students, younger readers, and those for whom English is not their first language.

This revised edition has therefore been prepared in order to make Gill's theology more accessible to contemporary readers while carfully preserving the doctrinal substance, theological terminology, scriptural argumentation, and Calvinistic convictions of the original author.

Particular care has been taken to preserve the theological accuracy of the text, the Authorized Version (King James Version) Scripture quotations, the structure of Gill's arguments, and the reverent tone of the original work.

The purpose of this edition is not to replace Gill's original writings, but rather to assist readers in understanding and studying them more easily. The original historical editions of Gill's works remain available for those who wish to consult the text in its original eighteenth century form.

In addition to the revised language, this edition includes structured study questions and educational material designed to assist students, pastors, Bible teachers, theological training schools, prison ministries, and churches in the systematic study of Christian doctrine and the doctrines of grace.

This work continues theological and missionary labour that has for many years included the printing, distribution, audio recording, and teaching of Dr Gill's writings among Christian students and churches, particularly in the Philippines.

Readers wishing to consult the original historical editions and related theological resources may do so through the ministry website:

www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

It is hoped that this revised edition may encourage careful theological study, strengthen believers in the doctrines of grace, and help preserve sound biblical teaching for future generations.

PRESENTATION AND DEDICATION

This revised edition of Dr John Gill's Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity is presented and dedicated to the students, pastors, teachers, and churches associated with Christ-Centered Church Ministries, Philippines, under the pastoral care of Bishop William O. Poloc Sr.

This work first arose out of missionary labour connected with prison ministry in the Philippines and the theological training that followed. Over the years, Dr Gill's writings have been printed, distributed, read aloud, and studied among ministers and students seeking a deeper understanding of the doctrines of grace and the great truths of the Christian faith.

The earlier edition was prepared chiefly for practical use and wide distribution among churches and Bible students, especially those with limited access to theological libraries and formal ministerial training. In the interests of economy and accessibility, certain features of the original works, including sections of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, were omitted.

This new edition has a different purpose.

First, while carefully preserving the doctrinal integrity, theological precision, and Calvinistic convictions of Dr Gill, the language is being revised into clearer and more readable modern English so that contemporary readers may more easily follow his arguments and teaching without losing the depth and substance of the original work.

Secondly, particular care is being taken to preserve theological terminology, retain the Authorised Version (King James Version) Scripture quotations, maintain doctrinal accuracy, and present the material in a form suitable for both serious study and devotional reading.

Thirdly, study questions and structured reading material are being added in order to assist students, ministers, Bible schools, and churches in the careful study of systematic theology and the doctrines of grace.

The aim of this edition is not to alter Gill's doctrine, but rather to remove unnecessary barriers caused by older forms of English, lengthy sentence structures, and difficult reading flow, while preserving the strength, reverence, and theological clarity of the original author.

It is hoped that this edition may serve future generations of Christians in the same spirit in which the earlier editions were distributed — namely, for the advancement of biblical truth, the defence of the doctrines of grace, and the instruction of believers in the Holy Scriptures.

Pastor William O. Poloc Sr. was released from New Bilibid Prison in August 2002, having completed theological studies during his imprisonment. Following his release, he returned to Baguio City together with his wife Beth, where prison ministry work began with assistance from David Clarke, founder of Trojan Horse International (TULIP) Inc.

In December 2002, baptisms were conducted among inmates in Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail, together with several others who professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

After David Clarke returned to the United Kingdom in 2003, the work in the Philippines continued to develop. A burden arose to establish a church within the city in order to reach families, relatives, local communities, and former inmates still imprisoned at New Bilibid Prison.

By the grace of God, Christ-Centered Church Ministries was established and gradually expanded throughout the Philippines.

Over time, churches were planted, Bible training developed, prison ministries expanded, and students were trained for Christian ministry. The work eventually included Christ-Centered Churches, theological training ministries, prison ministries, radio ministry, and missionary outreach throughout the archipelago.

To God alone be the glory.

PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This revised edition continues work that began many years earlier through missionary labour, theological teaching, and the distribution of Christian literature among churches and students in the Philippines.

It also coincides with more than fifty years since the conversion of David Clarke on 16 January 1971.

The doctrinal foundations reflected throughout this edition remain those historically maintained by the Bierton Particular Baptists and the

wider Calvinistic Baptist tradition represented in the writings of Dr John Gill.

INTRODUCTION

Having completed an exposition of the whole Bible, both of the Old and New Testaments, I considered what work might best follow for the further instruction of the people under my care. My thoughts led me to undertake a scheme of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity — first the former, and then the latter — the one being the foundation of the other, and both closely connected together.

Systematic Divinity, I am aware, has become greatly unpopular in our age. Formulas and articles of faith, creeds, confessions, catechisms, and summaries of divine truth are widely criticised and rejected. Yet what art or science has not been reduced to a system? Physic, metaphysics, logic, rhetoric, and every branch of learning have been arranged into orderly systems. Philosophy itself has had its various schools and systems. Not to mention the numerous sects of ancient philosophy, the Cartesian system greatly prevailed in the last age, just as the Newtonian system does in the present.

Medicine, jurisprudence, and every art and science are reduced to a system or body, which is simply an orderly arrangement of the several parts and doctrines belonging to that science. Why then should Divinity — the noblest of all sciences — be left without a system?

Evangelical truths are scattered throughout the Holy Scriptures. To gather them together and arrange them in a regular and orderly manner cannot reasonably be considered disagreeable. Rather, it must be useful for a clearer understanding of divine truth, better retention in memory, and for showing the harmony and agreement that exists among the doctrines of grace.

Accordingly, we find that Christian writers in ancient times attempted works of this nature through formulas of faith, symbols, and creeds produced during the first centuries of Christianity. Since the Reformation, bodies and systems of divinity, together with confessions of faith, have been composed with even greater care, consistency, and precision. These have proved highly useful in leading men into the knowledge of evangelical doctrine, establishing them in the truth, and demonstrating the agreement of sound divines and churches in the principal doctrines of the Christian faith.

The Scriptures themselves contain summaries and systems of doctrine and duty. What a remarkable compendium of law is found in

the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments — given especially for the use of Israel and perfectly suited to their condition.

The New Testament also speaks of "the form of doctrine" delivered to believers, "the form of sound words" which was to be held fast, and "the proportion of faith" according to which ministers were to prophesy and preach. (Romans 6:17; Romans 12:6; 2 Timothy 1:13)

The word "Theology" is Greek in origin and signifies a discourse concerning God and things pertaining to Him. Theology, or Divinity, is simply the doctrine concerning God and divine things. A Divine, or Theologue, is one who understands and teaches those sacred truths.

Natural theology may be considered either as it existed in Adam before the Fall, or as it exists in fallen mankind afterward. Before the Fall, Adam possessed extensive knowledge, both divine and natural, moral and civil. Being created in the image of God, he possessed knowledge as well as righteousness and holiness.

Supernatural theology, revealed directly by God, may next be traced through its rise and progress throughout history. The first revelation of evangelical truth after the Fall was given in the promise spoken to the serpent: "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The prophets spoke with increasing clarity concerning the incarnation of Christ, His sufferings, His offices, justification by faith, pardon through His blood, and redemption accomplished by His atoning work.

Yet alongside this revelation arose corruption: idolatry, false worship, Pharisaic tradition, Sadducean unbelief, and eventually the darkness of Antichrist and Popery.

Though divine truth was obscured for many centuries, God preserved a witness to His gospel among faithful men such as the Waldenses, the Albigenses, Wickliffe, Huss, and Jerome of Prague; until the Reformation was raised up through men such as Zwingli and Luther, by whom evangelical light again spread through Europe.

Let us therefore search the Scriptures diligently, to determine whether the doctrines set before us are agreeable to them or not.

I have little reason to expect this work will meet with favourable reception from the world generally. Yet if it may serve to preserve sacred truth, to enlighten any into the knowledge of it, or to establish believers in it, then I shall not be troubled by whatever opposition or reproach may arise from the enemies of those truths.

A WORD CONCERNING HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

The reading of sound doctrine ought never to be separated from the worship of God. Truth received merely into the intellect may inform the mind, yet leave the heart untouched. But when divine truth is joined with praise, meditation, and spiritual affection, it often becomes more deeply impressed upon the soul.

The Apostle Paul exhorted believers:

"*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*"— Ephesians 5:19

And again:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."— Colossians 3:16

For this reason, suitable hymns have been suggested at the conclusion of many chapters throughout this work. These are intended not merely for reading, but for meditation, worship, and reflection upon the truths set forth in the sacred Scriptures and expounded by Dr. Gill.

The great doctrines of grace were not only preached by the faithful servants of God in former generations, but were also sung in their assemblies, cherished in their hearts, and preserved in their hymns. It is hoped that these selections may assist the serious reader in joining together doctrine, devotion, and praise unto the God of all grace.

The hymns selected throughout this volume are chiefly drawn from Gadsby's Hymns and other historic collections of sovereign grace hymnody, chosen for their doctrinal agreement with the truths set forth in this work.

❦

Hymns Upon the Subject
Gadsby Hymn 1127 — L.M.
"When Zion's sons, great God! appear"
Scripture: Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16

Then shall we count the season dear
To those who speak or those who hear;
And all conspire with sweet accord,
In hymns of joy, to praise the Lord.

— J. Kent

Contents

ABOUT THIS REVISED EDITION 3

PRESENTATION AND DEDICATION 4

PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR 5

INTRODUCTION 7

CHAPTER 1 15
OF THE BEING OF GOD 15

CHAPTER 2 23
OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES 23

CHAPTER 3 33
OF THE NAMES OF GOD 33

CHAPTER 4 41
OF THE NATURE OF GOD 41

CHAPTER 5 47
OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN GENERAL, AND OF HIS IMMUTABILITY IN PARTICULAR 47

CHAPTER 6 53
OF THE INFINITY OF GOD, HIS OMNIPRESENCE AND ETERNITY 53

CHAPTER 7 59
OF THE LIFE OF GOD 59

CHAPTER 8 65
OF THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD 65

CHAPTER 9 73
OF THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD 73

CHAPTER 10 81
OF THE WISDOM OF GOD 81

CHAPTER 11 89
OF THE WILL OF GOD AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF IT 89

CHAPTER 12 97
OF THE LOVE OF GOD 97

CHAPTER 13 103
OF THE GRACE OF GOD 103

CHAPTER 14 107
OF THE MERCY OF GOD 107

CHAPTER 15 113
OF THE LONG SUFFERING OF GOD 113

CHAPTER 16
OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD 119

CHAPTER 17 125
OF THE ANGER AND WRATH OF GOD 125

CHAPTER 18 131
OF THE HATRED OF GOD 131

CHAPTER 19 135
OF THE JOY OF GOD 135

CHAPTER 20 139
OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD 139

CHAPTER 21 145
OF THE JUSTICE OR RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD 145

CHAPTER 22 153
OF THE VERACITY OF GOD 153

CHAPTER 23 161
OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD 161

CHAPTER 24 169
OF THE SUFFICIENCY AND PERFECTION OF GOD 169

CHAPTER 25 177
OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD 177

CHAPTER 26 185
OF THE UNITY OF GOD 185

CHAPTER 27
OF A PLURALITY IN THE GODHEAD191

CHAPTER 28 197
OF THE PERSONAL RELATIONS: OR RELATIVE PROPERTIES WHICH DISTINGUISH THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS IN THE DEITY 197

CHAPTER 29 203
OF THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE FATHER 203

CHAPTER 30 211
OF THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE SON OF GOD 211

CHAPTER 31 215
OF THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 215

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS 223

LET CHRISTIAN MEN BE MEN 223
DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION 224
CHRIST THE REST, NOT MOSES 226
ELDERSHIP IS MALE 227
CALLED FROM DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT 229
WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70 230
FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END 233

OF GOD, HIS WORD, NAMES, NATURE, PERFECTIONS, AND PERSONS

CHAPTER 1

OF THE BEING OF GOD

Having undertaken to write a System of Theology, or a Body of Doctrinal Divinity, and theology being nothing more than a discourse concerning God — His nature, names, perfections, and persons; His purposes, providences, works, ways, and Word — I shall begin with the Being of God, and the proofs and evidences of it.

This doctrine is the foundation of all religion. If there is no God, then religion is vain, and it matters little what men believe or practise, since there is no supreme Being to whom they are accountable for either faith or conduct.

Some have thought that the existence of God ought not to be argued at all, because it is a first principle and a self-evident truth. Yet such is the malice of Satan, who suggests the contrary to the minds of men; such is the corruption of wicked men, who willingly entertain those suggestions; and such is the weakness even of some godly persons, who are sometimes troubled with doubts and fears concerning it, that it cannot be improper to strengthen our minds with arguments confirming this great truth.

1. THE UNIVERSAL CONSENT OF MANKIND

My first argument for the Being of God is drawn from the general consent of mankind in all nations and throughout all ages of the world. The belief that there is a God has universally prevailed among men; and it is unreasonable to suppose such universal agreement could exist if the thing itself were false.

Even heathen writers observed this. Aristotle declared that all men possess some persuasion of Deity. Cicero likewise observed that no nation is so savage or barbarous as to be entirely without some notion of the gods. Though men differ greatly concerning what sort of god they

worship, yet all acknowledge some divine power and nature.

Again, Cicero says that there is no creature except man that possesses knowledge of God, and no nation so fierce or uncivilised that it does not recognise the necessity of some deity. Seneca likewise affirmed that no nation has ever existed so abandoned and immoral as to believe there is no God.

Plutarch made the remarkable observation that while cities may be found without walls, kings, wealth, theatres, or schools, no man has ever seen a city without temples, prayers, sacrifices, or gods.

These testimonies are especially striking because they were spoken at a time when idolatry greatly prevailed and the true knowledge of God had been largely obscured. Yet even then mankind universally retained some sense of Deity.

The heavenly bodies — the sun, moon, and stars — became among the first objects of false worship. Job plainly refers to this form of idolatry:

> *"If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed…"* (Job 31:26–27)

Though such idolatry demonstrates the dreadful corruption and ignorance of mankind, it also strongly confirms the force of this argument: men would rather worship false gods than acknowledge no god at all.

2. THE LIGHT AND LAW OF NATURE

The second argument for the Being of God is taken from the law and light of nature — that inward impression of Deity upon the mind of man.

The apostle Paul confirms this when he declares that even the Gentiles, who lacked the written law of Moses, nevertheless had "the work of the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:15).

Though the Fall has greatly darkened man's understanding, the light of nature has not been entirely extinguished. Men still possess sufficient awareness of God to leave them without excuse.

3. THE WORKS OF CREATION

The third argument proving the Being of God is drawn from the works of creation.

"The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly

seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." (Romans 1:20)

The visible creation plainly declares the existence and power of its Creator.

When we consider the heavens above us, the atmosphere surrounding the earth, the stars spread throughout the sky, and especially the sun — that inexhaustible fountain of light and heat — we are compelled to acknowledge an all-wise and almighty Creator.

The structure of the human body especially reveals divine wisdom. Every organ, nerve, muscle, and faculty is perfectly adapted to its purpose.

Even more wonderful is the soul of man.

It possesses understanding, reason, judgment, memory, imagination, conscience, affections, and will.

Above all, the soul bears the image of God and possesses immortality.

Such a creature cannot owe its origin to chance, matter, or self-creation, but only to God — "the Father of spirits."

4. THE PRESERVATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD

The fourth argument for the Being of God is taken from the continual preservation and government of the world.

As the world was created by God, so it is sustained by Him.

The regular succession of seed time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, rain and fruitful seasons, all plainly reveal the providential care of God.

5. EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS AND MIRACLES

The fifth argument may be drawn from extraordinary events, heroic actions, wonders, and miracles.

The miracles of Moses, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles plainly testify to the existence and operation of God.

6. PROPHECY AND FULFILLED PREDICTIONS

The sixth argument arises from prophecy and the fulfilment of future events.

Only an omniscient Being can certainly foretell future events.

The fulfilment of prophecy therefore provides strong evidence for the existence of God.

7. THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE

The seventh argument is taken from the fears of men, the accusations of conscience, and the dread of future judgment.

Conscience acts as a witness within man, accusing or excusing according to his conduct.

8. DIVINE JUDGMENTS IN THE WORLD

The final argument for the Being of God is taken from the judgments executed in the world.

The universal Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the death of Herod, and the sudden judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira all testify to the righteous government of God.

Who can seriously consider such things and yet deny the existence of God?

Furthermore, the existence and Being of God are not matters left uncertain or doubtful, dependent merely upon the reasoning of philosophers or the traditions of men. God Himself has plainly revealed His existence both in the works of creation and in the testimony of His Word. The denial of God is therefore not the result of superior wisdom, but of spiritual blindness and corruption of heart.

Though some throughout history have openly professed atheism, such persons have always been comparatively few. Even many who verbally deny God are often compelled inwardly by conscience to acknowledge Him, especially in times of danger, suffering, sickness, or approaching death. Sudden fear, inward dread, and the expectation of judgment frequently betray that natural awareness of God which men attempt to suppress.

Indeed, the universal tendency of mankind toward religion provides further testimony to the existence of God. However corrupted religion may become through ignorance, superstition, or idolatry, yet the near universal practice of worship among nations throughout history demonstrates that man possesses an inward persuasion that there exists a supreme Being worthy of fear, reverence, and worship.

The wisest among the heathen themselves acknowledged this

truth. Their poets, legislators, and philosophers frequently spoke of divine power, providence, and government. Though greatly corrupted in understanding, they nevertheless retained fragments of that natural knowledge of God still remaining after the Fall.

Yet natural revelation alone is insufficient to bring fallen man into the saving knowledge of God. While creation and conscience testify that there is a God, they do not reveal clearly the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. For this reason divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures is absolutely necessary.

God has therefore been pleased, at various times and in different manners, to reveal Himself unto men. In former ages He spoke through visions, dreams, prophecies, angels, types, sacrifices, and ceremonial ordinances, all gradually unfolding the covenant of grace and the promised Redeemer.

But in these last days God has spoken more fully and clearly through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.

> *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."* — Hebrews 1:1–2

The knowledge of God revealed in Christ far exceeds all that could ever be discovered merely through nature or reason. In Christ the mercy, justice, wisdom, holiness, truth, and grace of God shine forth most gloriously. There we behold not only God as Creator and Judge, but as Saviour and Redeemer.

The Being of God is not composed of parts, nor is God subject to change, decay, or limitation as creatures are. He is most pure Spirit, invisible and immortal, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto.

All perfections exist in God infinitely and eternally. Whatever goodness, wisdom, holiness, truth, or power may be found among creatures exists originally and perfectly in Him. The excellencies seen in creation are but faint reflections of that infinite perfection which dwells fully in God Himself.

Since God is eternal, there never was a time when He did not exist. He had no beginning and shall have no end. Creatures exist within time,

but God exists above and beyond all time, beholding all things in one eternal and perfect view.

Likewise, God is immutable — that is, unchangeable in His Being, purposes, promises, and perfections.

"For I am the Lord, I change not." — Malachi 3:6

All creatures are subject to change. Kingdoms rise and fall, men grow old and perish, and the whole created order is marked by mutability and decay. But with God there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His knowledge never increases, His wisdom never fails, His purposes never alter, and His promises never pass away.

This unchangeableness of God is a great source of comfort to His people. Because He changes not, His covenant remains sure, His grace remains constant, and His promises remain faithful throughout every generation.

God is also omnipresent, filling heaven and earth with His presence. No place is hidden from Him, nor can any creature escape His knowledge or power.

> *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* — Psalm 139:7

Yet although God is present everywhere, He is not contained within the universe, nor confined by space as creatures are. Heaven itself cannot contain Him.

Moreover, God is omniscient, knowing all things perfectly from eternity. Nothing past, present, or future is hidden from His sight. He knows the thoughts, intentions, and secrets of the heart.

This perfect knowledge of God extends not only to all actual events, but also to all things possible and contingent. Nothing can occur outside His knowledge, wisdom, and sovereign purpose.

God is likewise omnipotent, possessing all power in heaven and earth. He spoke the world into existence by His word, upholds all things by His power, governs providence, and accomplishes all His holy will.

> *"With God all things are possible."* — Matthew 19:26

Yet the power of God is always exercised in perfect wisdom, holiness, and righteousness. He cannot deny Himself, cease to be God, or act contrary to His own holy nature.

Thus the Scriptures reveal God as eternal, self-existent, infinite,

immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, holy, just, wise, and good — perfect in all His glorious attributes and infinitely worthy of worship, reverence, obedience, and praise.

Let all who study these divine truths do so with humility and holy reverence, remembering that we speak of Him whose greatness is unsearchable and whose glory surpasses all created understanding.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 1 — C.M.
"Great God! how infinite art thou!"

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" — Job 11:7

Great God! how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to thee.

Thy throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.

Eternity, with all its years,
Stands present in thy view;
To thee there's nothing old appears,
Great God! there's nothing new.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 2

OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

As what I shall say hereafter concerning God, His essence, perfections, persons, works, and worship, together with all things relating to Him, will be taken from the Holy Scriptures and proved by them, it is necessary first to establish the ground upon which we stand and confirm the divine authority of those sacred writings from which these truths are drawn.

By the Scriptures are meant the writings of the Old and New Testament, commonly called the Bible; a collection of books written at various times and by different men, yet all given by divine inspiration. Though written over many centuries, they possess a remarkable harmony and agreement in doctrine, design, and testimony, plainly showing that one divine Author stands behind them all.

The books of the Old Testament are those commonly received by the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God. These are the writings which Christ and His apostles continually appealed to and confirmed as the Word of God. The Jewish church carefully preserved these sacred books throughout successive generations, and they remain the same writings acknowledged among Christians today.

The books commonly called Apocryphal are not part of the inspired canon of Scripture. They were never received by the Jewish church as divinely inspired writings, nor were they acknowledged as such by Christ or His apostles. Although some things contained in them may be historically useful, they possess neither the authority nor purity of the canonical Scriptures and therefore cannot rightly be made a rule of faith or doctrine.

The books of the New Testament were written by the apostles of Christ and by men under apostolic direction and authority. These writings were received by the churches from the earliest times as sacred and inspired Scripture. They contain the revelation of the Gospel, the doctrine of salvation through Christ, and the completion of divine revelation given for the instruction and comfort of the church.

I. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

The authority of Scripture depends wholly upon God, its divine Author. The sacred writings are not to be received merely because of the testimony

of men or churches, but because they are the very Word of God itself. The church does not give authority to Scripture; rather, Scripture gives authority to the church.

There is indeed valuable external evidence supporting the truth and authenticity of the Scriptures. The antiquity of the writings, the preservation of the text through many ages, the testimony of history, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the agreement of the various books all strongly confirm their divine origin. Yet the highest and fullest evidence of Scripture's authority is found within the Scriptures themselves.

The majesty of their style, the holiness of their doctrines, the purity of their commands, and the glory they ascribe unto God all bear witness to their heavenly origin. The Scriptures uncover the corruption of man's heart, reveal the way of salvation through Christ, and direct sinners to the grace of God in a manner far beyond the wisdom of men.

Moreover, the harmony and agreement found throughout the whole Bible provide powerful evidence of divine inspiration. Though written by many different men, in different ages, circumstances, and places, the Scriptures speak with one united voice concerning God, sin, redemption, righteousness, and eternal life.

The penmen of Scripture plainly demonstrate honesty and sincerity. They faithfully record not only the virtues but also the failings of themselves and others. Moses records his own weakness; David his grievous sins; Peter his denial of Christ. Such openness bears witness that these men wrote not to exalt themselves but to declare the truth of God faithfully.

The doctrines contained in Scripture also display a wisdom far above human invention. The doctrine of the Trinity, the covenant of grace, the incarnation of Christ, justification by His righteousness alone, and salvation by sovereign grace are truths which could never have arisen from the wisdom or imagination of fallen men.

The prophecies contained in Scripture further establish its divine authority. Many things foretold centuries beforehand were fulfilled exactly in their appointed time. The rise and fall of kingdoms, the captivities of nations, and especially the coming, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ were all clearly foretold by the prophets.

The Scriptures likewise possess a transforming power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Through them sinners are convicted of sin, brought to repentance, comforted in affliction, strengthened in faith,

and instructed in holiness. The Word of God proves itself living and powerful in the experience of God's people throughout every age.

The apostle declares:

> *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*
> — 2 Timothy 3:16

The Scriptures were given not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The inspiration extends not merely to the general thoughts or doctrines, but to the very words themselves, so that the Scriptures, in their original writings, were wholly pure, true, and infallible.

The Hebrew language was chiefly used in the Old Testament, and the Greek in the New Testament. These languages were wisely appointed by divine providence, being the languages most suitable and widely known in the periods when the Scriptures were written. Although translations are of great usefulness and necessity for the church, the original writings remain the supreme standard by which all translations are to be examined.

Thus the Holy Scriptures stand as the perfect, sufficient, and infallible revelation of God to man, and the only certain rule of faith and practice.

II. THE HOLINESS, PURITY, AND EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Holy Scriptures plainly demonstrate themselves to be of divine origin by the holiness, purity, and excellence of the doctrines contained within them. No other writings in the world speak with such majesty concerning God, such purity concerning holiness, or such truth concerning the condition of man.

The Scriptures everywhere present God as infinitely holy, just, wise, powerful, and good. They ascribe unto Him all glory and perfection, while at the same time humbling the pride of man and exposing the corruption of the human heart.

Men naturally seek to exalt themselves and diminish their guilt. Yet the Scriptures speak plainly concerning the sinfulness and depravity of mankind. They declare that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately

wicked, and that salvation cannot be obtained by human righteousness or works.

Such doctrines could never arise naturally from the pride of fallen men. Human nature is inclined toward self-righteousness, boasting, and confidence in personal merit. But the Scriptures strip man of all such confidence and direct him entirely to the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel especially displays the wisdom and holiness of God in a manner far above all human invention. That salvation should come through the incarnation, sufferings, death, and righteousness of the Son of God is a doctrine which no human wisdom could ever have devised.

> *"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."* — 1 Corinthians 1:23–24

The purity of Scripture also appears in the holiness of its commands. The Word of God requires truth, righteousness, humility, purity, love, mercy, holiness, and obedience from the inward thoughts and affections of the heart as well as from outward conduct.

The law of God extends not merely to visible actions, but to the secret intentions and desires of the soul. It condemns sinful thoughts, unlawful desires, hypocrisy, pride, hatred, envy, and lust. Such spiritual purity far exceeds the morality taught by human philosophy or civil legislation.

The Scriptures likewise strongly oppose all forms of wickedness, idolatry, false worship, immorality, oppression, deceit, and ungodliness. They consistently direct men away from sin and toward holiness of life.

Moreover, the writers of Scripture demonstrate remarkable honesty and faithfulness in recording the faults and failures both of themselves and of others. Moses records his own unbelief and weakness. David openly confesses his grievous sins. Peter's denial of Christ is faithfully preserved by the Evangelists. Such impartial honesty is rarely found in merely human writings, where men ordinarily seek to hide their faults and magnify their virtues.

The harmony and agreement of the Scriptures further prove their divine authority. Though written by many different men over a long succession of ages, the Scriptures nevertheless agree together in one great design — namely, the glory of God in the salvation of sinners through

Jesus Christ.

The several books of Scripture were written by kings and shepherds, prophets and apostles, learned men and fishermen, in different countries, under different governments, and in widely separated periods of history. Yet throughout all these writings there runs one harmonious testimony concerning the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, redemption through Christ, justification by faith, and the everlasting kingdom of God.

The Old Testament continually points forward to Christ through promises, prophecies, sacrifices, ceremonies, and types. The New Testament reveals the fulfilment of those promises in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus both Testaments agree together as one complete revelation of divine truth.

The majesty of Scripture also demonstrates its heavenly origin. There is found within the sacred writings a greatness and sublimity beyond all ordinary human composition. The Scriptures speak with authority concerning the greatest subjects imaginable — God, eternity, heaven, judgment, sin, redemption, and everlasting life.

Even where the language itself is plain and simple, there remains a majesty and power which distinguishes the Scriptures from all other writings. The prophets declare the judgments of God with fearful authority, while the Gospel reveals the grace of God with incomparable beauty and tenderness.

The Scriptures also contain prophecies fulfilled long after they were spoken. Many events were foretold centuries beforehand and afterwards accomplished exactly according to the divine prediction.

The destruction of kingdoms, the captivities of nations, the rise and fall of empires, and especially the coming of the Messiah were all foretold by the prophets.

The birth of Christ, His sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and kingdom were clearly revealed in the Old Testament long before their fulfilment in history.

"To him give all the prophets witness." — Acts 10:43

Such fulfilled prophecy provides powerful evidence that the Scriptures proceed from the God who knows the end from the beginning.

The Holy Scriptures likewise possess a singular power upon the

consciences and hearts of men. Through the Word of God sinners are awakened to a sense of guilt, convicted of sin, humbled before God, and brought to repentance and faith in Christ.

The Scriptures comfort the afflicted, strengthen believers, direct the doubtful, rebuke the careless, and encourage the saints in holiness and perseverance.

> *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword."* — Hebrews 4:12

Throughout every generation the Word of God has demonstrated this transforming power in the lives of men and women brought from darkness to light through the Gospel of Christ.

Thus the holiness, purity, harmony, majesty, prophecy, and spiritual power of the Holy Scriptures all unite together in bearing witness that they are indeed the very Word of the living God.

III. THE PERFECTION, PERSPICUITY, SUFFICIENCY, AND NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Holy Scriptures are perfect and complete, containing the whole counsel of God necessary for His own glory, for the salvation of sinners, and for the faith and obedience of His people. Nothing essential to divine truth has been omitted, nor is any further revelation necessary to complete what God has already made known in His Word.

The perfection of Scripture appears in the wisdom, harmony, and fullness of its doctrine. The Word of God thoroughly instructs men concerning God, sin, redemption, righteousness, judgment, holiness, and eternal life. It reveals all things necessary to be believed concerning salvation and all things necessary for Christian conduct and obedience.

> "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." — Psalm 19:7

No human writings can claim such perfection. The wisest works of men are marked by weakness, error, uncertainty, and contradiction. But the Scriptures possess a purity and consistency which plainly demonstrate their divine origin.

The Scriptures are also sufficient for all the purposes for which God gave them. The church is not dependent upon human traditions,

unwritten revelations, or the inventions of men in matters of faith and worship. The Holy Scriptures contain a complete and sufficient rule by which doctrine is to be examined and religious practice regulated.

Whatever doctrines or practices cannot be supported by the Word of God ought not to be imposed upon the consciences of men. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has given His revealed will in the Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and obedience.

The sufficiency of Scripture is especially important in guarding the church against superstition, false doctrine, corrupt traditions, and human inventions in religion. Whenever men depart from the authority of Scripture, error and corruption inevitably follow.

The Scriptures are likewise clear and understandable in all things necessary to salvation. Although there are certain passages difficult to be understood, yet the way of salvation itself is plainly revealed so that ordinary believers, through diligent reading and the blessing of God, may attain a sufficient understanding of divine truth.

> *"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."* — Psalm 119:130

The doctrines necessary for salvation are not hidden within obscure mysteries accessible only to learned men, but are openly revealed in the Gospel. Christ and His apostles preached publicly to the people, and the Scriptures were written for the instruction and edification of the whole church.

At the same time, the Scriptures require reverence, diligence, prayer, and spiritual discernment. Natural men often remain blind to divine truth because of the corruption of their hearts and the influence of unbelief. Saving knowledge comes through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who opens the understanding to receive the things of God.

The perspicuity, or clarity, of Scripture does not mean that every passage is equally plain, nor that all difficulties are immediately resolved. Rather, it means that the essential truths necessary for salvation and Christian obedience are sufficiently revealed and may be understood by believers through ordinary means appointed by God.

The Holy Scriptures are also the infallible rule of faith and practice. All doctrines, teachers, churches, traditions, and religious claims are to be tested by the written Word of God.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." — Isaiah 8:20

The authority of Scripture stands above councils, traditions, church decrees, human opinions, and all merely earthly authority.

The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Ministers are therefore not lords over the faith of God's people, but servants of the Word entrusted with preaching and teaching the truth contained in Holy Scripture.

It is by the Scriptures that false doctrine is exposed, error corrected, conscience instructed, and believers established in the truth.

The necessity of divine revelation further appears from the weakness and corruption of human nature. Though some knowledge of God may be obtained through creation and providence, mankind by wisdom knew not God savingly. Human reason, darkened by sin, is unable to discover the way of reconciliation with God apart from divine revelation.

The wisest heathen philosophers, notwithstanding all their learning, remained ignorant of the true knowledge of salvation. Their speculations produced uncertainty, confusion, superstition, and idolatry rather than saving truth.

God has therefore graciously provided the Holy Scriptures as a sure and infallible revelation of His will. Through the written Word the knowledge of salvation is preserved, proclaimed, and transmitted throughout successive generations.

The Scriptures reveal truths which could never have been discovered by natural reason alone, including the doctrine of the Trinity, the covenant of grace, justification by the righteousness of Christ, redemption through His blood, and eternal salvation by sovereign grace.

These glorious truths depend entirely upon divine revelation.

Moreover, the written Scriptures provide a stable and permanent standard of truth. Had divine revelation been left only to oral tradition, it would soon have become corrupted, altered, and obscured by the weakness and sinfulness of men. But God, in His wisdom and mercy, caused His revelation to be committed to writing for the preservation of truth and the good of His church throughout all ages.

The Scriptures are therefore to be read diligently, heard reverently, studied prayerfully, and obeyed faithfully.

"Search the scriptures." — John 5:39

The neglect of Scripture leads to ignorance, error, spiritual weakness, and instability. But those who meditate upon the Word of God are strengthened in faith, comforted in affliction, instructed in righteousness, and made wise unto salvation.

Thus the Holy Scriptures stand as the perfect, sufficient, clear, necessary, and infallible revelation of God — the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice, given by divine inspiration for the instruction, preservation, and salvation of the church of God.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 6 — L.M.
"The heavens declare thy glory, Lord"

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." — 2 Timothy 3:16

The heavens declare thy glory, Lord,
In every star thy wisdom shines;
But when our eyes behold thy Word,
We read thy name in fairer lines.

The rolling sun, the changing light,
And nights and days thy power confess;
But the blest volume thou hast writ
Reveals thy justice and thy grace.

Sun, moon, and stars convey thy praise
Round the whole earth, and never stand;
So when thy truth began its race,
It touched and glanced on every land.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 3

OF THE NAMES OF GOD

Being about to treat of God and of the things of God, it is proper first to consider His names. The names of persons and things are ordinarily the first means by which they become known unto us, and therefore the names of God are worthy of careful attention, since they lead us into some knowledge of His nature and perfections.

Strictly speaking, God, being infinite and incomprehensible, cannot be fully described by any name given by man. Neither does He require a name in order to distinguish Him from others, since there is but one true and living God. Nevertheless, in the Holy Scriptures God has been pleased to reveal Himself under various names, each expressing something of His glorious nature, attributes, works, and relations toward His creatures.

Some names of God describe His essence and divine Being. Others declare His attributes, such as His holiness, goodness, wisdom, and power. Some reveal the relation of the divine Persons within the Godhead, namely Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Others express His relation to His creatures as Creator, Preserver, Lord, and Governor of all things.

Many of the names of God are common to the Three Persons of the Godhead, while others are especially applied to one divine Person according to the order of divine revelation. Some are figurative expressions taken from created things by way of comparison, while others are proper and peculiar names by which God reveals Himself in the Scriptures of truth.

I. ELOHIM

The first name of God which appears in the Holy Scriptures is "Elohim":

> *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* — Genesis 1:1

This name is frequently used throughout the Old Testament and is commonly translated "God." Though at times the word may be improperly applied to angels, rulers, judges, or false gods, yet in its highest and proper sense it belongs only unto the true and living God.

Many learned men have discussed the derivation of this name. Some

connect it with authority, judgment, power, or worship. The name well suits the divine Majesty, for God alone is the proper object of worship, fear, adoration, and obedience.

The word itself is plural in form, though commonly joined with singular verbs when speaking of the true God. From this many have observed an intimation of plurality of Persons within the unity of the divine essence — namely Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While the unity of God is fully maintained, the Scriptures nevertheless reveal a distinction of Persons within the Godhead.

This plurality is especially seen in the work of creation itself. God the Father created all things, the eternal Word was with God and was God, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Thus the very opening words of Holy Scripture contain a testimony both to the unity of the divine essence and to the plurality of Persons within the Godhead.

II. EL

Another name of God frequently found in Scripture is "El", often translated "the mighty God" or "the strong God."

This name especially points to the power, strength, and majesty of God. He is mighty in power, infinite in strength, and irresistible in all His works. Nothing is too hard for Him, nor can any creature resist His will.

The prophet Isaiah applies this glorious title to the promised Messiah:

"And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God." — Isaiah 9:6

The name therefore not only reveals the divine power of God generally, but also bears witness to the true deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God alone possesses absolute and underived power. All created strength is limited and dependent, but the power of God is eternal, infinite, and self-existent. By His power He created the heavens and the earth, governs providence, upholds all things, and accomplishes all His holy will.

This mighty God is also the refuge and defence of His people. The saints of God throughout every age have found strength, protection, and deliverance in Him. Though creatures fail, kingdoms fall, and earthly strength passes away, yet the eternal God remains almighty and unchangeable.

III. ELION — THE MOST HIGH GOD

Another glorious name of God is "Elion", meaning "The Most High God."

This name sets forth the absolute supremacy, exaltation, and dominion of God over all creatures. He is higher than the highest kings of the earth, exalted above all nations, and infinitely above all angels and powers.

> "***The Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.***" — Psalm 47:2

God is called "Most High" because His dwelling place is in the highest heavens, where He reigns in majesty and glory. Yet His greatness is not merely a matter of place, but of nature and authority. His understanding is infinite, His power unlimited, and His dominion universal.

All creatures are dependent upon Him and subject to His sovereign rule. He raises up kingdoms and casts them down according to His own wisdom and pleasure. None can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What doest thou?"

The name "Most High" therefore teaches men humility, reverence, and holy fear before the majesty of the eternal God.

IV. SHADDAI — GOD ALMIGHTY

Another important name of God is "Shaddai", commonly translated "Almighty."

Under this name God revealed Himself unto Abraham:

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God." — Genesis 17:1

This name especially declares the all-sufficiency and omnipotence of God. He possesses within Himself infinite fullness, needing nothing from His creatures in order to complete His happiness or perfection.

God is sufficient for Himself and sufficient for all His people. He is able to supply every need, preserve His church, fulfil His promises, and accomplish all His purposes without failure.

The Lord Almighty nourishes, sustains, preserves, and governs all creatures according to His sovereign will. Every blessing flows from Him as from an infinite fountain of goodness and mercy.

At the same time, this name also reveals the irresistible power of God in judgment. He is able both to save and to destroy. None can stand

against His power when He arises to execute justice upon the wicked.

Yet toward His people the Almighty exercises His power in mercy, faithfulness, protection, and grace.

V. THE LORD OF HOSTS

Another glorious title frequently found in Scripture is "The Lord of Hosts."

This title declares God's sovereign dominion over all the armies of heaven and earth. All creatures are under His authority and command.

The hosts of heaven include the sun, moon, stars, and all the heavenly bodies which move according to His appointment. The angels likewise are His heavenly host, standing continually before Him to do His will.

God also rules over the armies and nations of the earth. He raises up rulers, directs battles, grants victory, and overrules all events according to His own holy purpose.

The Lord of Hosts therefore possesses universal dominion over all creation. Nothing occurs apart from His sovereign government and providential control.

VI. ADONAI — LORD

Another well-known name of God is "Adonai", commonly translated "Lord."

This name especially denotes authority, dominion, and government. God is the rightful Lord and Governor of the whole earth because all things were created by Him and belong unto Him.

As Lord, He upholds all creatures by His power and governs them according to His wisdom. He is the righteous Judge of all the earth and will do right in all His judgments.

The Scriptures frequently apply this title both to the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is declared to be "Lord of all."

Thus the name Adonai teaches us that all men owe unto God reverence, obedience, submission, and worship.

VII. JEHOVAH

Among all the names of God, the most sacred and remarkable is "Jehovah."

This is the name by which God especially revealed Himself unto

Moses and by which He distinguished Himself from all false gods and idols.

"I am that I am." — Exodus 3:14

The name Jehovah expresses the eternal, self-existent, and unchangeable Being of God. He exists of Himself and depends upon none other for His being. All creatures receive life and existence from Him, but He derives His existence from none.

God always was, always is, and always shall be. He is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning and without end.

This name also teaches the faithfulness and immutability of God. What He has promised He will surely perform. His purposes stand firm throughout all generations.

The name Jehovah belongs properly and fully to the true God alone. It is incommunicable in its highest sense because no creature possesses self-existence or eternal being.

VIII. JAH

Another name of God found in Scripture is "Jah", which appears especially in the Psalms.

"Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH." — Psalm 68:4

This name appears to be a shortened form of Jehovah and carries the same essential meaning concerning the eternal Being of God.

IX. I AM THAT I AM

When Moses asked by what name he should speak of God unto the children of Israel, God replied:

"I AM THAT I AM." — Exodus 3:14

This glorious declaration expresses the eternal and unchangeable existence of God. He is the self-existent One, independent of all creatures, subject to no change, and eternally the same.

Our Lord Jesus Christ plainly alluded to this divine name when He declared:

"Before Abraham was, I am." — John 8:58

Thus Christ openly testified to His own eternal deity and equality with the Father.

X. THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the principal names used for God are those commonly translated "Lord" and "God."

These names reveal the same glorious truths concerning the divine nature, power, majesty, authority, and eternal Being of God as are revealed in the Old Testament.

The New Testament particularly applies divine titles unto the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby declaring His true and proper deity. He is called Lord of all, God blessed for ever, the great God and our Saviour, and the true God and eternal life.

From all the names of God revealed in Holy Scripture we learn that God is eternal, self-existent, immutable, almighty, all-sufficient, and infinitely glorious. He alone is worthy of worship, reverence, obedience, trust, and praise.

Let all who study these sacred names do so with reverence and holy fear, remembering that the God revealed in Scripture is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and wonderful in all His works.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 6 — L.M.
"The heavens declare thy glory, Lord"

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." — 2 Timothy 3:16

The heavens declare thy glory, Lord,
In every star thy wisdom shines;
But when our eyes behold thy Word,
We read thy name in fairer lines.

The rolling sun, the changing light,
And nights and days thy power confess;
But the blest volume thou hast writ
Reveals thy justice and thy grace.

Sun, moon, and stars convey thy praise
Round the whole earth, and never stand;
So when thy truth began its race,
It touched and glanced on every land.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 4

OF THE NATURE OF GOD

There is a nature belonging to every created thing, though in many respects difficult to understand. Much more, therefore, must the nature of God, the Creator of all things, surpass the full comprehension of finite creatures.

That there is a divine nature is plainly taught in the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Paul reminded the Galatians that before conversion they served those which "by nature are no gods" (Galatians 4:8), thereby implying that there is One who is truly and properly God by nature. Likewise the Scriptures speak of the "divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), not meaning the essential nature of God communicated unto men, but that gracious work of regeneration whereby believers are made partakers of holiness and bear the image and likeness of God in righteousness and true holiness.

This divine nature is commonly called the Godhead, Deity, or Divinity. It is not to be conceived of as resembling gold, silver, stone, or any created form devised by man. God is infinitely above all material likenesses and earthly representations. His eternal power and Godhead are declared in the visible works of creation, though His essence itself remains invisible and incomprehensible.

The fullness of this divine nature dwells bodily in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not merely a representation of God, but truly possesses the same divine essence with the Father. Thus Christ is said to be "in the form of God" (Philippians 2:6), meaning not any outward shape, but the glory, excellency, and fullness of the divine nature itself. He is one with the Father, equal with Him in nature and perfection.

The essence or Being of God is that whereby He is what He is. This is expressed especially in the divine names "Jehovah" and "I AM THAT I AM," which declare His eternal and self-existent Being. God exists necessarily and independently, deriving His existence from none other.

Yet the nature of God remains incomprehensible to finite creatures. Though something may be known of Him through creation and divine revelation, no creature can fully comprehend His infinite Being.

> *"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"* — Job 11:7

Nevertheless, though God cannot be comprehended fully, He may truly be known. The heathen world by wisdom knew not God savingly, though they possessed some natural awareness of His existence through creation and conscience. Divine revelation alone provides that clearer knowledge of God necessary for true worship and salvation.

Our Lord Himself has declared unto us the nature of God in the plainest terms:

"God is a Spirit." — John 4:24

This declaration, given by the eternal Son who perfectly knows the Father, provides the clearest description of the divine nature found in Scripture.

I. GOD IS SPIRIT

When the Scriptures declare that God is Spirit, we are taught first that God is not corporeal. He is not composed of flesh, blood, bones, or material substance as creatures are. Spirit and body are distinguished and opposed throughout the Word of God.

This truth removes from our minds all carnal and earthly conceptions of God. He is not to be imagined under any bodily form or material representation. Though some in various ages have imagined God to possess bodily shape or human form, such ideas are contrary both to reason and to Scripture.

If God were material, He could not be the Creator and Governor of all things. Matter in itself is lifeless, inactive, and incapable of wisdom or design. But the works of creation plainly reveal infinite wisdom, power, and intelligence.

Nor could a bodily being be omnipresent. A body is confined to place and space, whereas God fills heaven and earth. Neither could He be invisible, eternal, independent, and infinitely perfect if He were composed of material substance.

The Scriptures do indeed sometimes speak of the eyes, ears, hands, arms, and face of God. Yet such expressions are not to be understood literally, but figuratively, accommodating divine truth to human understanding.

The eyes of God signify His perfect knowledge and all-seeing providence. His ears denote His readiness to hear the prayers of His

people. His hands and arms represent His power in creation, providence, and salvation. His face sometimes signifies His favour and gracious presence, and at other times His righteous displeasure against sin.

These figurative expressions do not imply bodily parts in God, but rather communicate spiritual realities in language suited to our weakness and understanding.

II. THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD

The infinite nature of God cannot be fully comprehended by finite minds. Even in the eternal state the saints shall never exhaust the fullness of the divine Being.

This incomprehensibility does not mean that nothing may be known of God, but rather that no creature can know Him perfectly and exhaustively as He knows Himself.

The wisest philosophers among the heathen confessed their inability fully to understand the divine nature. The more deeply men consider the infinite majesty of God, the more conscious they become of the weakness and limitation of human understanding.

Yet God has graciously revealed sufficient knowledge of Himself for faith, worship, obedience, and salvation. The Scriptures reveal His attributes, His purposes, His works, and especially His grace in Jesus Christ.

Thus believers may truly know God, though never fully comprehend Him.

III. THE EXCELLENCY OF SPIRITUAL BEING

The spirituality of God teaches us to ascribe unto Him all the excellencies belonging to spiritual being in their highest and most perfect sense.

Spiritual beings are more excellent than material bodies. Angels and the souls of men possess understanding, will, life, and activity beyond what belongs to matter. Yet all created spirits are finite and dependent, whereas God is the eternal, uncreated, infinite Spirit.

God is living, active, intelligent, and powerful in the highest possible sense. He possesses life in and of Himself and gives life unto all creatures.

"In him we live, and move, and have our being." — Acts 17:28

God possesses infinite understanding. His wisdom is perfect, eternal,

and unsearchable. He knows Himself fully and knows all things possible and actual.

Likewise the will of God is sovereign and irresistible. He works all things according to the counsel of His own will and none can stay His hand or resist His purposes.

God is also infinitely holy, just, merciful, gracious, and loving. These are not qualities added unto Him, but are His very nature and essence.

IV. THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD

Because God is Spirit, He is also simple and uncompounded in His Being. He is not composed of parts as creatures are.

Men consist of body and soul. Material things are composed of various substances and parts. But God is absolutely simple in His essence.

He is not divided, compounded, or dependent upon anything outside Himself. Were God composed of parts, He would not be eternal, independent, or immutable. Whatever is compounded depends upon the union of its parts and may therefore be dissolved or changed.

But God is eternal, unchangeable, and perfectly one.

The divine attributes are not separate parts added unto God, but different ways by which the one infinite divine essence is revealed unto our understanding. God is not partly wise and partly powerful, but is wisdom itself, power itself, holiness itself, goodness itself, and love itself.

The weakness of human understanding requires us to consider the divine perfections separately, though in God they are one undivided essence.

Thus the simplicity of God preserves His infinite perfection, eternity, immutability, and independence. He is the one eternal and perfect Spirit, glorious in holiness, infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, and worthy of all worship and adoration.

Let all who meditate upon the nature of God do so with reverence and humility, acknowledging both the greatness of His majesty and the limitations of human understanding before Him.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 4 — C.M.
"Keep silence, all created things"

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." — John 4:24

Keep silence, all created things,
And wait your Maker's nod;
My soul stands trembling while she sings
The honours of her God.

Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on his firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.

Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men;
With every angel's form and size,
Drawn by th' eternal pen.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 5

OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN GENERAL, AND OF HIS IMMUTABILITY IN PARTICULAR

The attributes of God are those perfections which belong to the divine nature and by which God has been pleased to reveal Himself unto His creatures. Though these attributes are spoken of separately for the help of our understanding, they are not distinct parts of God, but are the one undivided divine essence viewed under different considerations.

Divines have distinguished the attributes of God in various ways. Some divide them into negative and positive attributes. Negative attributes remove from God all creaturely imperfection, such as mutability, mortality, and limitation. Positive attributes declare those perfections which belong unto Him eternally and infinitely, such as wisdom, holiness, goodness, justice, and truth.

Others distinguish the attributes into communicable and incommunicable perfections. The incommunicable attributes are those which belong unto God alone in an absolute sense, such as eternity, immutability, infinity, and independence. The communicable attributes are those of which some faint resemblance may be found among creatures, such as wisdom, goodness, mercy, and holiness, though in God these exist infinitely and perfectly.

All the attributes of God agree perfectly together and are one in Him. His wisdom is not separate from His holiness, nor His power from His goodness. The divine perfections are not divided parts, but harmonious expressions of the one infinite and perfect divine Being.

Among these glorious attributes of God, His immutability especially deserves careful consideration.

"I am the Lord, I change not." — Malachi 3:6

I. THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

Immutability belongs unto God alone in the absolute sense. All creatures are subject to change, but God remains eternally the same.

The heavens and the earth are continually changing. The seasons vary, kingdoms rise and fall, generations come and pass away, and all created things are marked by mutability and decay.

Even the visible heavens wax old as a garment and shall one day be dissolved. But concerning God the Scriptures declare:

"They shall perish, but thou remainest." — Psalm 102:26

The sun itself varies in appearance and motion, yet with God there is:

"No variableness, neither shadow of turning." — James 1:17

Angels, though glorious creatures, were originally mutable, as the fall of many of them plainly demonstrates. Man likewise, though created upright and holy, fell from his state of innocence through sin and became subject to corruption, suffering, and death.

The condition of mankind continually changes throughout life. Strength declines, beauty fades, health fails, and death at last reduces the body to dust.

But God alone remains perfectly and eternally unchanged.

II. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS NATURE

The immutability of God arises necessarily from His spirituality, simplicity, eternity, and infinite perfection.

Because God is simple and uncompounded, He cannot be altered or divided. Whatever is composed of parts may be changed through the alteration or separation of those parts. But God is without composition and therefore incapable of change.

Likewise, because God is eternal, He cannot be subject to change through time. Time belongs properly unto creatures, whose duration is measured by succession. But God exists above all succession of time in one eternal and unchanging Being.

"He is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." — Hebrews 13:8

God neither grows older nor passes from one state unto another. His eternity is one infinite and unchangeable present.

Nor can God change with respect to place, for He fills heaven and earth with His presence. Creatures move from place to place because they are finite and limited, but God is immense and omnipresent.

The infinite perfection of God also requires His immutability. Any change must either be for the better or for the worse. If for the better, then the being changing was imperfect before. If for the worse, then perfection is lost. But God is infinitely perfect and therefore incapable either of improvement or decline.

Furthermore, if God could change, the cause of that change must arise either from within Himself or from something outside Himself. If from within, then there would exist in God some principle of imperfection or composition. If from without, then there must be some power greater than God capable of altering Him. Both conclusions are impossible.

Therefore God is necessarily and eternally immutable.

III. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS PERFECTIONS

The divine attributes are unchangeable because the divine essence itself is unchangeable.

The power of God never diminishes. Though He has created and sustained innumerable creatures, His strength remains infinite and undiminished.

His understanding is likewise immutable. God knows all things perfectly from eternity. His knowledge never increases, for nothing can be added unto infinite understanding.

The goodness, mercy, and grace of God are also unchangeable. Though countless blessings have flowed from His goodness unto His creatures, the fountain itself remains eternally full.

> *"His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him."*
> — Psalm 103:17

The holiness of God remains eternally pure and undefiled. He can neither cease to be holy nor act contrary to His own righteous nature.

Likewise His truth and faithfulness never fail. Men may prove false and unbelieving, but God remains faithful unto Himself and unto His Word.

All the divine perfections remain eternally the same because God Himself remains eternally the same.

IV. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS PURPOSES

The purposes and decrees of God are likewise immutable.

> *"The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever."* — Psalm 33:11

God has from eternity decreed whatsoever comes to pass. His purposes are formed in infinite wisdom and are never frustrated or altered.

Men often change their plans because of ignorance, weakness, unforeseen circumstances, or lack of power. But none of these things can apply unto God.

He knows the end from the beginning. No event ever arises unexpectedly before Him. Nothing can resist His power or overthrow His counsel.

The decrees of God are therefore certain, wise, eternal, and unchangeable.

Though the providences of God vary greatly in outward appearance, all occur according to His fixed and eternal purpose. The changing circumstances of creatures do not imply change in God Himself.

V. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS LOVE

The love of God toward His people is from everlasting to everlasting and is never subject to alteration.

The fall of man did not extinguish this love, for even while His people were fallen sinners, God loved them and gave His Son for their redemption.

Nor does the remaining sinfulness of believers destroy His love toward them. Though He may rebuke and chastise His children, yet He never ceases to love them.

> *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."* — Hebrews 12:6

The hidings of God's face do not indicate the loss of His love, but rather His wise fatherly discipline for the good of His people.

Afflictions likewise are not tokens of hatred, but often the very expressions of divine love and faithfulness.

The love of God remains steadfast because it is grounded not upon the worthiness of creatures, but upon His own eternal grace and sovereign purpose.

VI. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS COVENANT

The covenant of grace stands firm and unalterable because it is established upon the eternal purpose and faithfulness of God.

> *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."* — Psalm 89:34

The promises of God are all sure in Christ Jesus. What God has purposed He will certainly perform.

The blessings of the covenant are gifts of sovereign grace and are not subject to the instability of human merit or performance.

The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. What He bestows according to His eternal purpose He never revokes.

VII. REPENTANCE AS SPOKEN OF GOD

The Scriptures sometimes speak of God as repenting. Such expressions are not to be understood literally, as though God changed His mind or discovered new knowledge.

> *"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent."* — Numbers 23:19

These expressions are figurative and describe a change in God's outward dealings according to His eternal will.

When God is said to repent of judgments threatened or blessings bestowed, the change is not in His eternal purpose, but in the condition and conduct of men toward whom those dispensations are directed.

Thus the repentance of Nineveh occurred according to the eternal purpose of God, who had appointed both the warning and the deliverance.

Likewise Hezekiah's recovery, though preceded by the announcement of death, occurred according to God's unchangeable decree.

In all such instances the outward administration changes, but the eternal will of God remains forever the same.

Thus God is immutable in His nature, attributes, purposes, love, covenant, promises, and truth. He alone is the eternal and unchanging God, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

Let all who trust in Him rejoice in this glorious perfection, for the unchangeableness of God is the firm foundation of the faith, hope, and comfort of His people throughout all generations.

After the conclusion of Chapter 5, I would recommend inserting the following:

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 12 — C.M.
"Among the attributes divine"

"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" — Exodus 15:11

Among the attributes divine,
Thy mercy shines most bright;
Not all the glories of thy throne
Have gained my love so much.

How shall I praise thy wondrous grace,
Or all thy triumphs tell,
That have revealed thy justice too,
And saved my soul from hell?

Great God! thy various attributes
Unite in perfect frame;
Infinite wisdom, power, and truth,
Harmonious in thy name.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 6

OF THE INFINITY OF GOD, HIS OMNIPRESENCE AND ETERNITY

The next attribute of God to be considered is His infinity. When we say that God is infinite, we mean that He is without bounds or limitations, immeasurable, immense, incomprehensible, and unsearchable. No created understanding can fully comprehend the infinite Being of God.

This infinity especially relates to the omnipresence and eternity of God. He is not bounded by space and therefore is everywhere present. Neither is He bounded by time, and therefore He is eternal.

The infinity of God arises necessarily from His spirituality and simplicity. God is not a body composed of parts, for every material body is finite, limited to place, and subject to time. But God is an uncreated Spirit.

Created spirits, such as angels and the souls of men, though immaterial, are nevertheless finite. They had a beginning, are dependent upon God for their existence, and are confined to particular places. But God is uncreated, independent, immense, and unlimited.

He existed before all time and before all space. Since He created all things, nothing can contain or limit Him.

"I am the first, and I am the last." — Isaiah 44:6

God is the first Cause of all things. All creatures derive their being from Him, but He depends upon none. All things are of Him, through Him, and to Him.

His immutability also demonstrates His infinity. If God moved from place to place as creatures do, or if He passed from one condition into another, He would be mutable. But He is eternally the same.

The infinity of God is seen throughout all His divine perfections.

His understanding is infinite.

"His understanding is infinite." — Psalm 147:5

God perfectly knows all things actual and possible. He knows all creatures in heaven and earth, all events past, present, and future, and all things which might have been.

There is no searching of His understanding.

Likewise His wisdom is infinite. The wisdom of the wisest creatures is but folly when compared with the wisdom of God.

The power of God is also infinite. Nothing is impossible with Him. The creation of the world out of nothing demonstrates His eternal power and Godhead.

His goodness is infinite and inexhaustible. Though He continually bestows blessings upon innumerable creatures, the fountain of divine goodness remains eternally full.

The holiness, justice, truth, mercy, and faithfulness of God are likewise infinite and perfect beyond all measure.

For this reason the Scriptures speak of God as immense and incomprehensible.

> *"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"* — Job 11:7

The greatness of God exceeds all creaturely understanding. Men may apprehend something of Him through revelation and creation, but no finite mind can fully comprehend the infinite nature of God.

I. THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

The infinity of God necessarily includes His omnipresence. Since He is not limited by space or place, He must be everywhere present.

The power and providence of God extend throughout all creation. He created all things and continually sustains them by His power.

> *"In him we live, and move, and have our being."* — Acts 17:28

All creatures depend upon Him continually for life, motion, preservation, and existence. Therefore God must be present with all things which He upholds.

The omnipresence of God is likewise evident from His perfect knowledge. All things are naked and open before Him. Nothing can be hidden from His sight.

The Scriptures teach this doctrine most clearly in Psalm 139.

> *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* — Psalm 139:7

The Psalmist proceeds to declare that whether he ascends into

heaven, descends into the grave, or travels to the uttermost parts of the sea, God is there.

This passage refers not merely to the gracious presence of God, but to His essential presence whereby He fills heaven and earth.

God is present in heaven in the manifestation of His glory and majesty. He is present upon earth by His power and providence. He is present with His people by His grace and Spirit.

Yet these differing manifestations of His presence do not divide the divine essence, for God is wholly present everywhere.

The Scriptures further declare:

"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." — Jeremiah 23:24

God is not contained within heaven or earth as creatures are. Rather He fills all things while Himself remaining uncontained and incomprehensible.

The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.

Though God is everywhere present, He is not polluted by contact with sinful creatures or defiled places. Material things may be corrupted, but God, being a pure and infinite Spirit, remains eternally holy and undefiled.

The sun shines upon unclean places without itself becoming defiled; much more does the infinitely holy God remain pure while present throughout all creation.

II. THE ETERNITY OF GOD

As God is not bounded by space, neither is He bounded by time. Therefore He is eternal.

The Scriptures repeatedly describe Him as the everlasting God and the eternal King.

"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." — Psalm 90:2

Creatures exist within time and are measured by succession of moments, days, and years. But God existed before time began.

Time itself began with creation. Before the heavens and the earth were formed, God alone existed in His own eternal Being.

The eternity of God means not merely endless duration, but existence without beginning, without ending, and without succession.

God does not grow older. Nothing passes away with Him, nor does

anything newly arise in His knowledge or being.

> *"With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* — James 1:17

The eternal nature of God is evident from His self-existence. He exists necessarily and independently. There never was a moment in which He was not.

Had God begun to exist, He must either have caused Himself to exist or have been caused by another. Both ideas are impossible. Therefore He exists eternally and necessarily.

His immutability likewise proves His eternity. That which changes from non-existence into existence undergoes the greatest possible change. But God is immutable and eternally the same.

The eternity of God also appears in His decrees and purposes. His counsels are from everlasting.

The covenant of grace was established before the world began. Christ was foreordained as Mediator before the foundation of the world, and the elect were chosen in Him before time itself.

The love of God toward His people is likewise eternal.

> *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."* — Jeremiah 31:3

The eternity of God is also without succession. Past, present, and future are distinctions belonging properly to creatures, not to God.

All things are eternally present before Him. He sees all events in one perfect and eternal view.

Thus one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God remains eternally the same while all creatures pass through continual change and succession.

He is before all things, above all things, through all things, and shall remain forever the blessed and eternal God.

Let all who meditate upon these glorious truths do so with reverence, humility, and holy admiration, acknowledging that the infinite majesty of God surpasses all created understanding.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 27 — C.M.
"Our God, how firm his promise stands"

"For I am the LORD, I change not." — Malachi 3:6

Our God, how firm his promise stands,
E'en when he hides his face;
He trusts in our Redeemer's hands
His glory and his grace.

Then why, my soul, these sad complaints,
Since Christ and we are one?
Thy God is faithful to his saints,
Is faithful to his Son.

Beneath his smiles my heart has lived,
And part of heaven possessed;
I praise his name for grace received,
And trust him for the rest.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 7

OF THE LIFE OF GOD

Having considered the attributes of simplicity, immutability, infinity, omnipresence, and eternity, which belong unto God as an infinite and eternal Spirit, we now proceed to consider the life of God.

Life is a most excellent perfection of the divine nature. Indeed, some have considered it not merely as one attribute among others, but as expressive of the fullness of all the divine perfections. God is life essentially, eternally, and efficiently.

In seeking to understand something of the life of God, it is useful first to observe the different degrees of life found among creatures. Though none can perfectly resemble the divine life, yet by ascending from lower forms of life to higher, some faint apprehension may be gained of that infinite and perfect life which belongs unto God alone.

Life in creatures is that principle by which they possess motion and activity. Whatever has true self-motion is considered living.

The lowest form of life is found in vegetables. Herbs, plants, and trees possess a principle of growth and increase. Though lacking sensation and local motion, they nevertheless live.

A higher degree of life is found in animals. These possess sensation, appetite, movement, and the ordinary functions of animal existence.

Higher still is rational life, belonging unto angels and the souls of men. Rational creatures possess understanding, will, affections, and inward acts of thought and choice.

Yet even this falls infinitely short of the life of God.

The nearest resemblance to the divine life is found in spiritual life within regenerated persons. Through the grace of God they become partakers of the divine nature, receive a principle of holiness, and live spiritually unto God.

Nevertheless, all creaturely life remains finite, dependent, and imperfect. The life of God alone is infinite, independent, underived, and perfect.

I. GOD IS LIFE ESSENTIALLY

God is life in and of Himself.

> "*The Father hath life in himself.*" — John 5:26

Life does not merely belong unto God as something added to Him. Rather, life is His very nature and essence.

All created life is derived and dependent. Creatures live because God gives and sustains their life. But the life of God is underived and independent.

He does not receive life from another, nor does His life depend upon anything outside Himself.

The life of creatures arises from composition and union. In man, natural life depends upon the union of soul and body. When that union is dissolved, bodily life ceases.

But God is a simple and uncompounded Spirit. His life does not arise from any union of parts or principles.

Therefore His life is infinite, immutable, and perfect.

The Scriptures repeatedly describe Him as the living God.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." — Psalm 42:2

This title distinguishes Him from idols and false gods, which are lifeless and powerless.

The heathen worshipped images of wood, stone, silver, and gold, as well as the heavenly bodies and deified rulers. But these possess no true life.

"The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king." — Jeremiah 10:10

God alone possesses life absolutely and essentially.

II. GOD IS LIFE ETERNALLY

The life of God is eternal.

He neither began to live nor can ever cease to live.

Creaturely life has a beginning. Angels and human souls, though immortal in duration, nevertheless were created and therefore had a commencement.

But God is from everlasting to everlasting.

He is without beginning of days or end of life.

"I live for ever." — Deuteronomy 32:40

This eternity of divine life follows necessarily from the simplicity,

immutability, and independence of God.

Whatever is composed of parts may be dissolved. But God, being simple and uncompounded, is incapable of dissolution.

Likewise whatever depends upon another may cease if that support is withdrawn. But God depends upon none.

His life is wholly independent and self-existent.

The immutability of God likewise proves the eternity of His life. Death is the greatest conceivable change. But God is eternally the same and therefore incapable of death.

"Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." — Psalm 102:27

The Scriptures therefore call Him immortal, everlasting, and eternal.

Even heathen philosophers understood that true Deity must possess immortal and eternal life.

Yet God alone possesses immortality in the highest and absolute sense.

Creatures possess life only by participation and dependence. God alone possesses life essentially and independently.

III. GOD IS LIFE EFFICIENTLY

God is not only life in Himself, but the fountain and giver of life unto all creatures.

"With thee is the fountain of life." — Psalm 36:9

Every degree of life proceeds from Him.

Vegetable life in plants and trees is sustained by His power.

Animal life in birds, beasts, and fishes depends continually upon His providence.

Rational life in angels and men is likewise His gift.

"In him we live, and move, and have our being." — Acts 17:28

No creature can give life independently. Men may imitate appearance and motion, but true life belongs unto God alone to give.

Most especially, spiritual life is the work of God.

By nature men are dead in trespasses and sins. They possess natural life, but are spiritually dead toward God.

Only the living God can quicken dead sinners and give them spiritual

life.

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." — Ephesians 2:5

This spiritual life consists in faith, holiness, communion with God, and newness of life through Jesus Christ.

It is preserved by divine power and shall issue in everlasting life.

Eternal life itself is the gift of God.

It was purposed before the world began, promised in the covenant of grace, purchased by Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ came that His people might have life abundantly.

"I am the resurrection, and the life." — John 11:25

The Spirit of God likewise works this life within believers, dwells in them as the earnest of glory, and prepares them for everlasting communion with God.

Thus all life, whether natural, rational, spiritual, or eternal, flows from God as its eternal source and fountain.

Since God gives life unto all creatures, He Himself must possess life infinitely, perfectly, independently, and eternally.

Let all therefore acknowledge the living God with reverence and worship, remembering that in Him alone is the fountain of life, both for time and eternity.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 1 — C.M.
"Great God! how infinite art thou!"

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." — Psalm 145:3

Great God! how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to thee.

Thy throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.

Eternity, with all its years,
Stands present in thy view;
To thee there's nothing old appears,
Great God! there's nothing new.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 8

OF THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

Among the names by which God reveals Himself in Holy Scripture are several which especially declare His strength, stability, might, and power. Such names as El, Adonai, and El-Shaddai all point unto the almighty power of God. The Scriptures repeatedly speak of Him as "Almighty" and "Omnipotent," declaring that power belongs unto Him alone.

Omnipotence belongs essentially unto God. It is not something added unto Him, but is His very nature. A weak deity is a contradiction and absurdity. The true and living God must necessarily possess infinite and almighty power.

Though God had never created the world nor displayed His power in outward works, He would nevertheless have remained omnipotent from eternity, since omnipotence belongs unto His eternal and divine essence.

> *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."* — Romans 1:20

The omnipotence of God may first be inferred from His nature as an infinite and uncreated Spirit. All spirits possess power according to their nature. The human soul itself possesses understanding, will, affection, and the power to move and direct the body.

Angelic spirits excel still further in strength and power. The Scriptures describe them as mighty angels who excel in strength.

> *"Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength."* — Psalm 103:20

If created spirits possess such power, how much more must the infinite and eternal Spirit possess omnipotence?

The omnipotence of God also follows from His infinity. Every perfection of God is infinite, and therefore His power must likewise be infinite.

His understanding is infinite, His presence infinite, His duration infinite, and His power infinite.

To deny or question the omnipotence of God is to limit the Holy One of Israel.

The Israelites were guilty of this sin when they doubted whether God

could provide for them in the wilderness.

"Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" — Psalm 78:19

The omnipotence of God is likewise evident from His independence. All creatures depend upon Him, but He depends upon none.

There is no superior power above Him, no being capable of restraining His will or hindering His purpose.

"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." — Daniel 4:35

The perfection of God also requires omnipotence. Want of power is an imperfection in creatures and would therefore be an imperfection in God were it possible.

But God is infinitely perfect.

His power exceeds all human conception and expression.

"He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." — Ephesians 3:20

Indeed, many other divine perfections would be of little comfort without omnipotence. What advantage would there be in wisdom if God lacked power to perform His wise purposes? What comfort in His promises if He lacked ability to fulfil them? What assurance in His goodness if He were unable to exercise it?

Thus omnipotence belongs necessarily unto God.

I. THE POWER OF GOD IS UNIVERSAL

The power of God extends unto all things possible and proper unto His divine nature.

"With God all things are possible." — Matthew 19:26

What is impossible with men is possible with God. The laws and ordinary course of nature are subject unto Him who created nature itself.

Thus God caused the sun to stand still in the days of Joshua. He made iron to swim in the days of Elisha. He preserved the three Hebrews unharmed in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.

These things surpass the ordinary course of nature, yet are easily accomplished by the omnipotent God.

There are certain things, however, which God cannot do, not from weakness, but from the perfection of His nature.

He cannot deny Himself.

> *"God cannot lie."* — Titus 1:2

He cannot act contrary to His holiness, truth, righteousness, wisdom, or divine nature.

He cannot make another God equal unto Himself, for this would destroy the unity of the divine Being.

Neither can He make contradictions true, such as causing the same thing both to be and not to be at the same time.

These things do not imply limitation in God, but rather the infinite perfection of His nature.

II. ABSOLUTE AND ORDAINED POWER

The power of God may be considered as absolute or ordained.

By His absolute power God is able to do whatsoever does not contradict His own nature and perfections, whether He has decreed to do it or not.

Thus Christ declared that God was able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Likewise Christ could have prayed for twelve legions of angels for His deliverance, though it was not the divine will that this should occur.

God who created one world could have created innumerable worlds. He who made the stars beyond number could have vastly multiplied them.

The power of God has never been exhausted nor exerted to its utmost extent.

His ordained or actual power refers unto that which He has decreed and brought to pass according to His eternal will.

Whatever God wills is certainly accomplished.

III. OMNIPOTENCE IN CREATION

The omnipotence of God appears gloriously in creation.

> *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* — Genesis 1:1

Creation is the bringing forth of something out of nothing, which none but God can accomplish.

Men may fashion existing materials into various forms, but no creature can create matter itself.

God created all things merely by His commanding word.

"He spake, and it was done." — Psalm 33:9

The works of creation were accomplished instantly and without labour or weariness.

At His word light shone forth out of darkness. The heavens were stretched out. The earth brought forth vegetation. The stars appeared in their glory. Living creatures filled sea and land. Finally man himself was formed from the dust of the earth and made a living soul.

All these things proclaim the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator.

IV. OMNIPOTENCE IN PROVIDENCE

The almighty power of God is continually displayed in His providential government of the world.

All creatures live, move, and continue by His sustaining power.

"He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." — Hebrews 1:3

The earth hangs upon nothing except the will and power of God.

The sea is restrained within its appointed bounds.

The clouds carry vast quantities of water and yet are not broken beneath their burden.

God sends rain upon the earth, gives fruitful seasons, provides food for man and beast, and sustains the whole creation.

The remarkable events recorded in Scripture further display His omnipotence.

The flood destroyed the ancient world. Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire from heaven. Great victories were won by weak and helpless instruments through divine power alone.

The Lord removes mountains, shakes kingdoms, restrains the sea, commands the heavens, and governs all events according to His sovereign will.

V. OMNIPOTENCE IN REDEMPTION

The omnipotence of God shines most gloriously in the work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

The incarnation itself was an act of divine power.

> *"The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."* — Luke 1:35

The human nature of Christ was miraculously formed in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost, preserving Him from all taint of sin.

The life of Christ upon earth continually displayed divine omnipotence.

He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, cleansed lepers, cast out devils, calmed storms, and raised the dead.

The strength granted unto Christ in His sufferings also displayed omnipotence.

He bore the weight of divine wrath, satisfied infinite justice, overcame Satan, fulfilled the law, and accomplished eternal redemption for His people.

The resurrection of Christ especially demonstrated the exceeding greatness of divine power.

He was declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead.

VI. OMNIPOTENCE IN CONVERSION

The conversion of sinners is likewise a work of almighty power.

Men by nature are dead in trespasses and sins. Spiritual life cannot arise from fallen man himself.

Conversion is therefore described as a creation and a resurrection.

> *"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."* — Ephesians 2:5

In conversion God creates a new heart and spirit within His people. He turns them from darkness unto light and from the power of Satan unto God.

The means used in conversion further magnify divine power.

God is pleased to use the preaching of the Gospel through weak and imperfect instruments in order that the excellency of the power may be seen to belong unto Him alone.

Despite the opposition of indwelling sin, worldly temptation, and satanic malice, God effectually calls His elect and brings them unto salvation.

VII. OMNIPOTENCE IN THE PRESERVATION OF BELIEVERS

The perseverance of believers likewise demonstrates the omnipotence of God.

Were believers left unto themselves, they would quickly fall away through temptation, corruption, and weakness.

But they are preserved by divine power.

> *"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."* — 1 Peter 1:5

The same almighty grace which begins the work of salvation carries it on and completes it unto eternal glory.

VIII. OMNIPOTENCE IN THE RESURRECTION

The omnipotence of God shall finally be displayed in the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.

The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth from their graves.

> *"All that are in the graves shall hear his voice."* — John 5:28

The same power which created all things and raised Christ from the dead shall raise all mankind unto life or condemnation.

The wicked shall be judged and punished according to divine justice, while the righteous shall enter everlasting life.

Thus the omnipotence of God shall be displayed throughout all ages in creation, providence, redemption, conversion, preservation, resurrection, and judgment.

Let all therefore fear, worship, trust, and adore the almighty God, unto whom all power belongs in heaven and in earth.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 43 — C.M.
"My God, the spring of all my joys"

"For with thee is the fountain of life." — Psalm 36:9

My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights.

In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun.

The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss,
While Jesus shows his heart is mine,
And whispers I am his.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 9

OF THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

Having considered those attributes of God which belong unto Him as an active and operative Spirit, such as His life and omnipotence, we now proceed to consider those perfections which belong unto Him as an intelligent Spirit. Among these, knowledge and wisdom especially require our attention.

The Holy Scriptures frequently speak of the mind and understanding of God.

> *"Who hath known the mind of the Lord?"* — Romans 11:34

Knowledge therefore belongs essentially unto God and exists in Him in infinite perfection.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD PROVED

The omniscience of God has often been denied or questioned by atheistical and irreligious men, especially concerning the affairs of mankind.

> *"How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?"* — Psalm 73:11

Such objections generally arise from false notions concerning the distance of God from earthly affairs, or from imagining that darkness and secrecy can conceal things from Him.

But the omnipresence of God entirely removes such objections.

> *"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord."* — Jeremiah 23:24

Darkness and light are alike unto Him.

The knowledge of God may also be inferred from the knowledge found in His creatures.

Angels possess great understanding. Man likewise was originally created with knowledge and reason. Even in his fallen state there remains within him some understanding of natural and moral things.

Now if there is knowledge in creatures, there must infinitely more be knowledge in the Creator.

All creaturely knowledge proceeds originally from God.

"He teacheth man knowledge." — Psalm 94:10

God is the fountain of all wisdom and understanding. Therefore perfect knowledge must exist in Him infinitely and eternally.

The will of God likewise proves His knowledge.

God works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

"He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." — Ephesians 1:11

But will without knowledge would be irrational and imperfect. God wills all things wisely and knowingly.

The works of creation also proclaim His omniscience. The heavens, earth, sea, and all creatures reveal wisdom, order, proportion, and design beyond all human comprehension.

The government of the world likewise requires perfect knowledge.

God judges the earth in righteousness, orders providence wisely, and shall bring every work into judgment.

Without infinite knowledge God could not be infinitely blessed and perfect.

II. GOD KNOWS HIMSELF PERFECTLY

God knows Himself perfectly and infinitely.

Creatures possess some limited knowledge of themselves. Men may know something of their own thoughts, affections, and inward faculties. Angels likewise possess self-awareness according to their created nature.

If finite creatures know themselves imperfectly, then God must know Himself infinitely and perfectly.

The Father knows the Son perfectly.

"Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." — Matthew 11:27

The Son likewise knows the Father fully and eternally.

The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God and perfectly knows the divine mind.

Thus each divine Person possesses perfect knowledge of the one divine essence.

God knows His own decrees, purposes, and eternal counsels because

they arise from Himself.

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." — Acts 15:18

The mystery of the Trinity itself is perfectly understood by God, though infinitely beyond the full comprehension of creatures.

III. GOD KNOWS ALL CREATURES

There is not any creature hidden from the sight of God.

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight." — Hebrews 4:13

God knows all inanimate creation. He knows the stars by number and calls them all by their names.

He knows every plant, tree, mineral, and element throughout the earth.

He knows all irrational creatures.

"I know all the fowls of the mountains." — Psalm 50:11

Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge and will.

He knows all rational creatures likewise.

The holy angels stand continually before Him and execute His commands. The fallen angels are also known unto Him and remain under His sovereign restraint.

God especially knows all mankind.

He knows the hearts of men.

"The Lord searcheth all hearts." — 1 Chronicles 28:9

He knows every thought before it arises within the mind.

"Thou understandest my thought afar off." — Psalm 139:2

He knows all words spoken by men, whether good or evil.

"There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." — Psalm 139:4

He knows all actions and ways of men, public and secret alike.

All things are open before Him and shall one day be brought into judgment.

IV. GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS POSSIBLE

The omniscience of God extends not only unto things actual, but also unto all things possible.

God knows what creatures might do under every possible circumstance.

Thus He warned David concerning the men of Keilah, that if he remained among them they would deliver him into the hands of Saul.

God therefore knows not only what will occur, but what would occur under differing circumstances.

This knowledge demonstrates the infinite perfection of divine understanding.

V. GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS ACTUAL

God knows all things past, present, and future.

Nothing that has ever occurred is forgotten by Him.

The entire history of creation, the rise and fall of nations, the lives of men, and every secret act remain perfectly known unto God.

Likewise all present things are fully visible before Him.

> *"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."* — Hebrews 4:13

His omnipresence ensures that nothing escapes His sight.

God also knows all things future.

> *"I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning."* — Isaiah 46:9–10

Prophecy throughout Scripture continually demonstrates this truth.

The captivity in Egypt, the Babylonian exile, the rise of kingdoms, the coming of Christ, His sufferings, resurrection, and glory, together with countless other events, were foretold centuries beforehand.

The Book of Revelation itself stands as a continual testimony unto the foreknowledge of God.

VI. THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The foreknowledge of God extends even unto contingent events and the free actions of men.

Though many things appear uncertain unto creatures, nothing is uncertain unto God.

Even the lot, which appears random unto men, is determined by divine providence.

"The whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." — Proverbs 16:33

God foretold the actions of particular persons centuries before their birth.

Josiah was named before he existed and his actions prophesied beforehand.

Likewise Cyrus was foretold by name long before his birth and was appointed by God to restore Jerusalem.

God therefore knows future human actions infallibly.

This foreknowledge does not destroy the liberty of man's will. Men act voluntarily according to their own desires and inclinations, yet all events occur according to the eternal purpose and foreknowledge of God.

Judas betrayed Christ willingly, yet this occurred according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

VII. FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION

The Scriptures also speak of a special foreknowledge connected with election unto eternal life.

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." — Romans 8:29

This foreknowledge is not merely bare awareness of future actions, faith, or holiness.

Rather it includes divine love, favour, approval, and gracious regard toward the elect people of God.

"The Lord knoweth them that are his." — 2 Timothy 2:19

This knowledge is particular, gracious, and eternal.

God knows His people as His beloved and chosen ones from

everlasting.

VIII. THE MANNER OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

The manner in which God knows all things is incomprehensible unto us.

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me." — Psalm 139:6

God does not gain knowledge through instruction, learning, observation, or reasoning as men do.

"Who hath taught him?" — Isaiah 40:13

His knowledge is not successive, increasing from moment to moment. All things are eternally present before Him in one perfect and unchanging view.

Nor does God reason from one thing unto another as creatures do.

His knowledge is immediate, perfect, eternal, and intuitive.

He knows all things in Himself.

All creatures exist originally within the eternal ideas and purposes of God.

The knowledge of God is therefore infinite.

"His understanding is infinite." — Psalm 147:5

Nothing can be added unto it, diminished from it, or concealed from it.

The omniscience of God is also certain and infallible. Since all things occur according to His eternal will and purpose, His knowledge can never fail nor be mistaken.

Thus God perfectly knows Himself, all creatures, all things possible, all things actual, all future events, and all the hearts and ways of men.

Let all therefore stand in reverence before the all-knowing God, unto whom all things are naked and open, and whose understanding is infinite and eternal.

❦

Hymns Upon the Subject
Gadsby Hymn 6
"God's ways are just, his counsels wise"
Scripture: Psalm 139:1–6; Hebrews 4:13; Romans 11:33

God's ways are just, his counsels wise,
No darkness can his thoughts conceal;
He sees the heart beneath disguise,
And all our secret ways reveal.

His knowledge spans eternal years,
Past, present, future, full and clear;
Before his all-discerning eyes,
The thoughts of every soul appear.

— B. Beddome

CHAPTER 10

OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

The next attribute of God requiring our attention is His wisdom, which belongs unto Him as an intelligent Spirit. Wisdom is more comprehensive than knowledge, for it not only supposes knowledge, but rightly directs and applies it unto the best ends and purposes.

The wisdom of God governs all His counsels, works, and dispensations. It directs His power and goodness in the most perfect manner. Infinite wisdom belongs unto Him necessarily and essentially.

I. THE WISDOM OF GOD PROVED

No one who truly believes in the being of God can reasonably deny His wisdom. An unwise being could never be God.

The Holy Scriptures continually testify unto this perfection.

"With him is wisdom and strength." — Job 12:13

Again:

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his." — Daniel 2:20

God is repeatedly called "the only wise God."

"To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever." — Romans 16:27

This does not exclude the Son or the Holy Spirit, who are likewise divine and possess all the perfections of the Godhead. Christ Himself is called "the wisdom of God," and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

But when compared with creatures, God alone possesses wisdom infinitely and perfectly.

The angels, though exalted in understanding, are nevertheless charged with folly when compared unto Him.

"His angels he charged with folly." — Job 4:18

Man likewise possesses but little wisdom. Though many appear wise in earthly matters, all are naturally ignorant concerning spiritual things.

God, however, is all-wise. There is no defect or limitation in His

understanding.

Men may be wise in some matters and foolish in others. Even the wisest among men often speak foolishly or act unwisely. But no folly can ever be found in the Word of God or in the works of His hands.

"How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all." — Psalm 104:24

The wisdom of God is essential unto Him. It is not something added unto His nature, but is His very Being and essence.

As God is love itself and goodness itself, so He is wisdom itself.

His wisdom cannot be separated from His essence without destroying the simplicity of the divine nature.

God is also the source and fountain of all creaturely wisdom.

Whatever wisdom exists among angels, men, rulers, philosophers, craftsmen, or scholars, all proceeds originally from God.

"He giveth wisdom unto the wise." — Daniel 2:21

Most especially, spiritual wisdom is His gift.

The fear of the Lord, understanding in divine truth, and wisdom unto salvation are all bestowed by Him.

The wisdom of God is infinite and unsearchable.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" — Romans 11:33

No creature can fully comprehend its greatness.

II. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN HIS DECREES

The wisdom of God appears gloriously in His eternal decrees and purposes.

The Scriptures therefore often call them His counsels.

"Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." — Isaiah 25:1

Among men, wise resolutions usually arise from careful thought and consultation. But God has no need of consultation, either with Himself or with others.

He sees all things perfectly and eternally in one simple act of understanding.

His will is immediately and perfectly directed by infinite wisdom.

The end appointed by God in all His decrees is His own glory.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself." — Proverbs 16:4

Since all things are of Him, through Him, and unto Him, it is fitting that His own glory should be the supreme end of all things.

The means appointed to accomplish His purposes are likewise chosen with perfect wisdom.

God employs both extraordinary means and ordinary second causes, all operating under His sovereign direction.

The seasons and times appointed for the fulfilment of His purposes are fixed with perfect wisdom.

"To every thing there is a season." — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Nothing unforeseen can ever arise to frustrate His designs, for He knows the end from the beginning.

"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." — Isaiah 46:10

This wisdom appears especially in the decree of election.

God chose His people before the foundation of the world according to the good pleasure of His own will.

This choice was not based upon foreseen works, goodness, or worthiness in men, but upon His sovereign grace alone.

Thus His grace is magnified, pride is excluded, and salvation is shown to be entirely of mercy.

The means appointed for the salvation of the elect likewise display divine wisdom.

God determined that salvation should come through sanctification of the Spirit, faith in Christ, and redemption through His blood.

The decree of reprobation likewise manifests divine wisdom and justice.

God endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, thereby displaying His justice, wrath against sin, and sovereign power.

Even the sinful actions of men, though not caused by God, are wisely overruled for the accomplishment of His holy purposes.

The fall of Adam, though the greatest evil ever entering the world, has been overruled for the greater manifestation of divine grace in redemption through Christ.

Likewise the selling of Joseph into Egypt, and above all the crucifixion of Christ, though wickedly performed by men, occurred according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Thus divine wisdom continually overrules evil for good while God Himself remains perfectly holy and righteous.

III. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE

The wisdom of God shines brightly in the covenant of grace established between the Father and the Son before the world began.

This covenant was wisely ordered in all things for the glory of God and the everlasting good of His people.

Christ was appointed Mediator and Surety of the covenant, and all spiritual blessings were placed safely in His hands.

The covenant is filled with promises suited unto every need of God's people throughout time and eternity.

IV. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN CREATION

The wisdom of God is clearly seen in the works of creation.

> *"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all."* — Psalm 104:24

The heavens declare His wisdom.

The sun is placed at a proper distance from the earth, providing both light and warmth without destroying life.

Its regular motions and appointed seasons continually proclaim divine order and wisdom.

The moon and stars likewise serve their appointed purposes with astonishing regularity.

The atmosphere, clouds, rain, and snow all display wonderful wisdom in their formation and distribution.

The earth itself is abundantly furnished for the use of man and beast.

Vegetation, fruits, herbs, grain, metals, and minerals all reveal the goodness and wisdom of the Creator.

The bodies of living creatures are wonderfully adapted unto their various functions and environments.

Fishes are fitted for swimming, birds for flying, beasts for movement upon the earth, and man for rational and spiritual life.

The structure of the human body especially displays astonishing

wisdom.

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." — Psalm 139:14

All creatures are wisely ordered for mutual usefulness and especially for the service of mankind, for whose benefit the earth was furnished before his creation.

Above all, all things were made ultimately for the glory of God.

V. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE

The providence of God continually displays His wisdom.

The regular succession of seasons, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, all proceed according to His wise appointment.

God provides food for all creatures according unto their nature and need.

> *"He giveth to the beast his food."* — Psalm 147:9

The various conditions and stations of men in society are wisely ordered for mutual dependence and benefit.

Prosperity and adversity are likewise appointed with wisdom for the good of God's people and the accomplishment of His purposes.

Many providences appear mysterious and difficult unto us at present. But when viewed together in their full connection, the wisdom of God shall be clearly manifested.

VI. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN REDEMPTION

The wisdom of God appears most gloriously in the work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

> *"Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."* — 1 Corinthians 1:24

Infinite wisdom was displayed in appointing the Son of God to be the Redeemer of men.

No sinful man could redeem another, for all had sinned and stood condemned.

Neither could angels accomplish this work.

Only the Son of God, possessing both divine and human natures united in one Person, was fitted for this office.

As man, He could obey the law, suffer, and die in the place of sinners.

As God, His obedience and sufferings possessed infinite worth and efficacy.

The incarnation itself displays marvelous wisdom.

The human nature of Christ was formed by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, preserving Him from all corruption of sin.

By assuming human nature into personal union with Himself, the Son of God made His obedience and sacrifice infinitely valuable.

The wisdom of God further appears in the reconciliation of mercy and justice through the cross of Christ.

Mercy desired the salvation of sinners.

Justice required satisfaction for sin.

Through the atoning death of Christ both are perfectly honoured.

> *"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."* — Psalm 85:10

The wisdom of God is also seen in overthrowing Satan through the very means by which Satan sought the ruin of man.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, Satan's kingdom is destroyed and believers are redeemed unto everlasting life.

VII. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL

The Gospel itself is called "the wisdom of God in a mystery."

Its doctrines reveal profound wisdom.

Justification is entirely of grace, yet fully consistent with divine justice through the righteousness of Christ.

Pardon of sin is freely bestowed, yet grounded upon full satisfaction through the blood of Christ.

Faith is wisely appointed as the instrument by which righteousness is received, thereby excluding all boasting and preserving salvation as entirely of grace.

The ordinances of the Gospel likewise display wisdom.

Baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The Lord's Supper continually shows forth His sacrificial death for sinners.

The preaching of the Gospel by weak and frail men further magnifies divine wisdom and power.

God places heavenly treasure in earthen vessels so that the excellency of the power may appear to be of Him alone.

VIII. THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PRESERVATION OF THE CHURCH

The wisdom of God is continually displayed in the preservation and government of His church throughout all ages.

Though exposed unto persecution, opposition, and weakness, the church has been wonderfully sustained by divine power and wisdom.

No weapon formed against her has prospered.

God continues to guide, preserve, and increase His people according to His eternal purpose.

Thus in His decrees, creation, providence, redemption, Gospel, and church, the wisdom of God shines forth gloriously.

Let all therefore adore and praise the only wise God, whose understanding is infinite and whose counsels stand forever.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT

Gadsby Hymn 40 — C.M.
"God moves in a mysterious way"

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" — Romans 11:33

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

— William Cowper

CHAPTER 11

OF THE WILL OF GOD AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF IT

Having considered the attributes of God which belong unto His understanding as an intelligent Spirit, namely His knowledge and wisdom, we now proceed to consider His will and the sovereignty belonging unto it.

In every intelligent being there exists both understanding and will. As this is true of angels and men, so it must infinitely and perfectly be true of God.

The understanding of God directs His will, and His will determines all His actions. Because His will is perfectly guided by infinite wisdom, the Scriptures frequently call it "the counsel of his will."

> *"He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."* — Ephesians 1:11

The will of God is frequently mentioned throughout the Holy Scriptures.

> *"The will of the Lord be done."* — Acts 21:14

> *"Who hath resisted his will?"* — Romans 9:19

The will of God is not something separate from His essence, as though it were one part among many within the divine nature. God is a simple and uncompounded Spirit. Therefore His will is God Himself willing.

The divine will belongs equally unto each Person of the blessed Trinity.

The Father wills.

> *"This is the Father's will."* — John 6:39

The Son wills.

> *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."* — John 17:24

The Holy Spirit likewise wills.

"All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." — 1 Corinthians 12:11

Yet though these three Persons subsist distinctly, they possess one undivided divine will because they are one God.

I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SECRET AND REVEALED WILL OF GOD

There is but one will in God. Nevertheless, for the help of our understanding, divines have distinguished it in different ways.

The most useful distinction is between the secret and revealed will of God.

The secret will of God consists of those eternal purposes and determinations which remain hidden within Himself until He is pleased to make them known.

These are called:

"The deep things of God." — 1 Corinthians 2:10

Before events come to pass, they exist within the eternal counsel of God.

But when God brings His purposes to pass through providence or reveals them through prophecy, they become His revealed will.

Thus the rise and fall of kingdoms, the preservation of the church, the coming of Christ, the spread of the Gospel, and the final overthrow of antichrist all existed first within the secret will of God before becoming manifest in history.

Likewise there is a secret will of God concerning every individual person.

A time is fixed for birth and death.

"To every thing there is a season." — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Many things concerning our lives remain hidden from us until providence reveals them.

We know not what shall befall us tomorrow. We know not the precise time, place, or manner of our death. These things remain within the secret counsel of God.

At times God has revealed parts of His secret will through prophecy.

Thus He revealed unto Abraham the future bondage and deliverance of his descendants.

Likewise the sufferings and glory of Christ were revealed beforehand by the prophets through the Spirit of Christ which was in them.

The revealed will of God is made known especially in His law and Gospel.

The law reveals what God commands men to do. It shows His holiness and the duty required of mankind.

The Gospel reveals His gracious purposes concerning salvation through Jesus Christ.

It reveals election, redemption, effectual calling, sanctification, and eternal life in Christ.

> *"This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."* — John 6:40

Yet even here there remains a hidden aspect, for though the Gospel reveals salvation in Christ generally, the personal knowledge of one's own interest in these blessings is often attained only through faith and the inward work of grace.

II. THE PRECEPTIVE AND DECRETIVE WILL OF GOD

The clearest distinction concerning the will of God is between His will of precept and His will of decree.

The will of precept refers unto what God commands men to do.

This is the rule of human duty.

It consists in fearing God and keeping His commandments.

The law reveals what is pleasing unto God and what men ought to perform.

Yet this will is often transgressed by sinful creatures. Every sin is a violation of the revealed commandment of God.

The decreeing will of God, however, always comes to pass infallibly.

This is the eternal purpose according to which God works all things.

> *"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."* — Isaiah 46:10

Nothing can resist or frustrate this sovereign will.

Even wicked men unknowingly fulfil it while acting according to

their own sinful desires.

Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Jews, and the Gentiles fulfilled the eternal counsel of God in the crucifixion of Christ.

> *"Against thy holy child Jesus… were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."* — Acts 4:27–28

Thus the decretive will of God is always fulfilled perfectly.

This sovereign will ought humbly to be acknowledged in every condition of life.

> *"If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."* — James 4:15

III. THE OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE WILL

The primary object of God's will is His own glory.

> *"The Lord hath made all things for himself."* — Proverbs 16:4

Since all things are of Him, through Him, and to Him, His own glory is necessarily the highest and ultimate end of all His works.

God cannot will His glory to another, for this would be contrary unto His own divine perfection.

All things outside Himself are also objects of His will, whether in nature, providence, grace, or judgment.

All good things are according to His will.

Creation itself arose according unto His sovereign pleasure.

> *"Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* — Revelation 4:11

Providence likewise operates according unto His will.

> *"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."* — Daniel 4:35

All spiritual blessings in Christ are according unto His sovereign purpose and grace.

Election, redemption, calling, sanctification, and eternal glory all proceed from His eternal will.

God's will is also concerned with afflictions and judgments.

These do not arise by chance.

The afflictions of believers are wisely appointed for their spiritual good.

The punishments of the wicked display divine justice and righteousness.

IV. THE WILL OF GOD IN RELATION TO SIN

The relation of the divine will unto sin requires careful consideration.

God is not the author of sin.

He neither commits sin Himself nor approves of sin as evil.

He is:

"of purer eyes than to behold evil." — Habakkuk 1:13

Yet nothing comes to pass outside His sovereign will and providence.

The sinful actions of men are foreknown by God and permitted according unto His eternal purpose.

The fall of Adam, the selling of Joseph into Egypt, and above all the crucifixion of Christ all occurred according unto the determinate counsel of God while still remaining truly sinful acts committed willingly by men.

God wills sin not as sin, but for the sake of the wise and holy ends which He brings to pass through it.

He permits sinful acts voluntarily and wisely without Himself becoming morally responsible for the evil contained within them.

The act itself, considered merely as an action, depends upon God as the Author of all power and motion.

But the corruption, irregularity, and sinfulness of the act belong entirely unto the creature.

Thus God remains perfectly holy while sovereignly governing all events.

V. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE DIVINE WILL

The will of God possesses several glorious properties.

First, it is essential unto God Himself.

His will is not distinct from His divine essence.

There is therefore but one divine will, because there is but one God.

Secondly, the will of God is eternal.

The purposes of God existed before the foundation of the world.

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." — Ephesians 1:4

If the will of God began in time, then change would exist in God. But He is eternal and unchangeable.

Thirdly, the will of God is immutable.

"He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" — Job 23:13

God may alter His outward dispensations in providence, but His eternal purpose never changes.

Repentance attributed unto God in Scripture does not imply change within the divine mind, but rather a change in His outward dealings with men according unto His eternal purpose.

Fourthly, the will of God is always efficacious.

Whatever God wills certainly comes to pass.

"He doeth whatsoever he hath pleased." — Psalm 115:3

No purpose of God can fail.

Were His will frustrated, He would cease to be almighty and infinitely blessed.

Fifthly, the will of God has no cause outside Himself.

Nothing greater than God can influence or determine His will.

He wills all things according unto His own sovereign wisdom and pleasure.

For this reason election unto eternal life cannot be grounded upon foreseen faith, works, or holiness in man.

God's sovereign will itself is the first cause.

Sixthly, the will of God is not conditional in the sense imagined by many.

Were the divine will dependent upon conditions performed by creatures, then the ultimate determination of salvation would rest not upon God but upon man.

But salvation is wholly of grace and according unto the sovereign will of God.

VI. THE WILL OF GOD IS MOST FREE AND SOVEREIGN

The will of God is most free and sovereign.

God acts according to His own wisdom and pleasure, being dependent upon none and accountable unto none.

The sovereignty of His will appears in creation, providence, grace, and salvation.

He creates as He pleases, governs as He pleases, dispenses mercy as He pleases, and orders all things according to the counsel of His own will.

This sovereignty is never separated from His wisdom, holiness, justice, or goodness. God never wills anything rashly or unjustly, but always according to the infinite perfection of His nature.

VII. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE DIVINE WILL

The sovereignty of God appears throughout all His works.

It appears in creation itself.

God might have created many worlds or none at all. He might have created this world sooner or later. He might have created creatures differently than He has done.

All these things depended entirely upon His sovereign pleasure.

The sovereignty of God likewise appears in providence.

The conditions, circumstances, riches, honours, infirmities, and lifespan of men are all under His sovereign government.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was compelled to confess:

> *"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."* — Daniel 4:35

The sovereignty of God shines especially in matters of grace and salvation.

Some angels were preserved in holiness while others were permitted to fall.

Among mankind, God chooses some unto eternal life while passing by others according unto His own wise and righteous pleasure.

> *"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."* — Romans 9:15

The means of grace are distributed sovereignly throughout the world.

Some nations enjoy the light of the Gospel while others remain in darkness.

The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are bestowed according unto God's sovereign will.

Repentance and faith are divine gifts.

Eternal life itself is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ.

Yet though the will of God is absolutely sovereign, it always acts in perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness.

His will is therefore called:

"The counsel of his will." — Ephesians 1:11

The sovereignty of God is not arbitrary tyranny, but the infinitely wise rule of the eternal and glorious God who works all things for His own glory and according unto the perfection of His divine nature.

Let all therefore bow before His sovereign majesty with reverence, humility, submission, and trust.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT

Gadsby Hymn 39 — C.M.

"Thy way, O God, is in the sea"

"Who hath resisted his will?" — Romans 9:19

Thy way, O God, is in the sea,
Thy paths I cannot trace;
Nor comprehend the mystery
Of thine unbounded grace.

As through a glass I dimly see
The wonders of thy love,
How little do I know of thee,
Or of the joys above!

Though but in part I know thy will,
I bless thee for the sight;
When every cloud shall pass away,
All shall be clear and bright.

— John Fawcett

CHAPTER 12

OF THE LOVE OF GOD

Having considered the understanding and will of God, together with the sovereignty belonging unto His divine purposes, we now proceed to consider those perfections which are sometimes spoken of under the name of affections. Properly speaking, there are no passions or fluctuating emotions in God as there are in men, for He is a most pure, simple, and perfect Spirit, free from all disorder and imperfection. Yet because certain things are said and done by Him which bear some resemblance unto affections among intelligent creatures, such language is used in Scripture concerning Him.

Among these divine perfections, love stands foremost.

"God is love." — 1 John 4:8

Love belongs unto the very nature of God. It is not merely something He exercises, but something He is essentially and eternally.

I. THE OBJECTS OF THE LOVE OF GOD

The first and highest object of the love of God is God Himself.

Every intelligent being possesses a proper self-love, and this is not sinful when rightly ordered. God, being infinitely perfect, must necessarily delight in Himself above all else.

His own glory is therefore the supreme end of all His works in creation, providence, and grace.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself." — Proverbs 16:4

The blessedness of God consists in the perfect knowledge, delight, and enjoyment of His own infinite perfections.

The three divine Persons likewise love one another with infinite and eternal love.

The Father loves the Son.

"The Father loveth the Son." — John 3:35

The Son is called the beloved and dear Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased.

This love existed before the foundation of the world.

"Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." — John 17:24

The Father delights in the Son because He is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person, possessing the same divine nature and perfections.

The Son also eternally loves the Father. As Mediator He delighted to do His Father's will, even unto death.

"I delight to do thy will, O my God." — Psalm 40:8

The Holy Spirit likewise proceeds in perfect union and love from the Father and the Son, revealing their love unto the hearts of God's people.

The love of God also extends unto all His creatures.

When God finished the work of creation, He declared all that He had made to be "very good."

He preserves all creatures in their being and bestows countless benefits upon them.

"His tender mercies are over all his works." — Psalm 145:9

The holy angels are objects of divine love. God has confirmed them in holiness, granted them access unto His glorious presence, and appointed Christ as their Head.

Men likewise, as creatures formed by His hand, receive innumerable expressions of divine goodness and providential care.

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." — Matthew 5:45

Yet there is a special and distinguishing love which God bears unto His elect people in Christ.

This is called His "great love."

"God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us." — Ephesians 2:4

This love is sovereign, particular, and eternal.

II. THE LOVE OF THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT TOWARD THE ELECT

The love of the Father appears in His eternal thoughts of peace toward His chosen people.

Before the world began He chose them in Christ unto salvation.

> *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."* — Ephesians 1:4

He entrusted them unto Christ as their covenant Head and Surety, laid up all spiritual blessings for them in Him, and appointed His Son to accomplish their redemption.

The love of the Father further appears in the pardon of sin, adoption into His family, regeneration by His Spirit, and the gift of eternal life.

The love of the Son appears in His eternal delight toward His people.

His delights were with the sons of men before the world was made.

He undertook their cause as Surety of the covenant, willingly engaged to obey the law on their behalf, and assumed human nature in order to redeem them.

> *"Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us."* — Ephesians 5:2

The greatness of His love is especially seen in His sufferings and death.

He laid down His life for His sheep, shed His blood for the remission of sins, and purchased eternal redemption for His people.

The love of the Holy Spirit appears in His gracious work within the hearts of believers.

He convinces them of sin, reveals Christ unto them, comforts them, strengthens them, and sheds abroad the love of God within their souls.

> *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."* — Romans 5:5

He implants grace, assists in prayer, witnesses adoption, seals believers unto the day of redemption, and preserves them unto eternal glory.

III. THE PROPERTIES OF THE LOVE OF GOD

The love of God toward His elect possesses several glorious properties.

First, there is no cause of it outside God Himself.

There is nothing in fallen men capable of attracting or deserving the love of God. By nature all are corrupt, sinful, and children of wrath.

The loveliness found in believers is itself the fruit of divine grace, arising from the righteousness of Christ imputed unto them and the sanctifying work of the Spirit within them.

Therefore the love of God does not arise from foreseen goodness, works, faith, or holiness in men.

"We love him, because he first loved us." — 1 John 4:19

Faith itself is the gift and fruit of divine love, not the cause of it.

The love of God proceeds entirely from His own sovereign good pleasure.

"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." — Exodus 33:19

Secondly, the love of God is eternal.

It did not begin in time, but existed from everlasting.

The elect were loved before the foundation of the world.

This eternal love appears in election, the covenant of grace, the appointment of Christ as Mediator, and the promises of eternal life given before the world began.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love." — Jeremiah 31:3

Thirdly, the love of God is immutable.

It never changes, diminishes, or fails.

The fall of Adam did not prevent God from loving His people. Their sins in an unconverted state did not extinguish His love, nor do their failures after conversion separate them from it.

God may alter His outward dealings toward His children, rebuking and chastising them for their good, but His love itself remains unchanged.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." — Hebrews 12:6

The manifestations of His love may vary, but the love itself remains eternally the same.

Fourthly, the love of God is everlasting and inseparable.

Nothing can separate believers from it.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" — Romans 8:35

Neither death nor life, angels nor principalities, things present nor things to come, can dissolve this union of love between Christ and His people.

Earthly comforts may fail, friends may depart, health may decline, and life itself may end, but the lovingkindness of God shall never depart from His elect.

"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." — John 13:1

Thus the love of God is eternal in its origin, sovereign in its exercise, immutable in its nature, and everlasting in its duration.

It is the source of every spiritual blessing, the foundation of redemption, and the everlasting comfort of all the saints.

Let all therefore admire, adore, and rest in the infinite and unchangeable love of God revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 9 — L.M.
"Awake, my soul, in joyful lays"

"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." — Jeremiah 31:3

Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing thy great Redeemer's praise;
He justly claims a song from me;
His loving-kindness, O how free!

He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!

Though numerous hosts of mighty foes,

Though earth and hell my way oppose,
He safely leads my soul along;
His loving-kindness, O how strong!

— Samuel Medley

CHAPTER 13

OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Having considered the love of God, we now proceed unto the grace of God, which naturally follows from it. Grace is one of the most glorious and comforting attributes revealed in the Holy Scriptures, for by grace sinners are saved, justified, sanctified, and preserved unto eternal life.

The grace of God is frequently spoken of throughout the Word of God and stands at the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. THE MEANING OF DIVINE GRACE

Grace properly signifies favour freely shown unto those who deserve no favour at all.

When applied unto God, it especially refers unto the free, sovereign, and undeserved goodness of God exercised toward sinful men.

Grace is not something earned by human works, merit, worthiness, or obedience. If salvation depended in any measure upon human merit, it would cease to be of grace.

> *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."* — Romans 11:6

Grace therefore excludes boasting.

II. THE GRACE OF GOD IS ETERNAL

The grace of God toward His elect was purposed from everlasting.

> *"Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* — 2 Timothy 1:9

Grace is therefore not an afterthought brought in because of man's fall, but part of the eternal counsel and purpose of God.

III. THE GRACE OF GOD IS FREE AND SOVEREIGN

Grace is entirely free.

"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." — Exodus 33:19

God bestows grace according unto His own sovereign pleasure and not according unto human worthiness.

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." — Ephesians 2:8

IV THE GRACE OF GOD IS RICH AND ABUNDANT

The Scriptures frequently speak of the riches and abundance of divine grace.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." — Ephesians 1:7

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." — Romans 5:20

V. THE GRACE OF GOD IS MANIFESTED IN CHRIST

All saving grace is bestowed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." — John 1:17

There is therefore no saving grace apart from Him.

VI. THE GRACE OF GOD IN REDEMPTION

The whole work of salvation magnifies divine grace.

"So then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." — Romans 11:5

"Being justified freely by his grace." — Romans 3:24

Thus salvation from beginning unto end is wholly of grace.

VII. THE GRACE OF GOD TEACHES HOLINESS

True grace teaches holiness and godliness.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly." — Titus 2:11–12

Grace humbles the sinner, produces gratitude, strengthens obedience, and leads believers unto greater conformity unto Christ.

VIII. COMMON GRACE AND SAVING GRACE

There are certain favours bestowed generally upon mankind which may properly be called common grace.

Yet saving grace belongs particularly unto the elect of God.

Saving grace changes the heart, unites the sinner unto Christ, and infallibly brings the soul unto eternal glory.

IX. THE GLORY OF DIVINE GRACE

The ultimate design of salvation by grace is the glory of God.

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace." — Ephesians 2:7

Thus the grace of God stands revealed in Scripture as free, sovereign, eternal, abundant, Christ-centred, sanctifying, and glorious beyond all human expression.

Unto Him therefore be glory forever and ever. Amen.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 347 — C.M.
"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound"

"By grace are ye saved through faith." — Ephesians 2:8

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

— John Newton

CHAPTER 14

OF THE MERCY OF GOD

The mercy of God differs in some respects from both the love and grace of God, though all are perfectly united within the divine nature.

Love views its objects as creatures considered in themselves, while mercy regards them as fallen, miserable, and ruined by sin. Love may be considered as moving toward its objects in their original state as creatures, whereas mercy supposes misery and distress.

Grace differs likewise from mercy. All mercy is indeed gracious, because it is free and undeserved; yet not all grace is mercy. The holy angels receive abundant grace and favour from God, yet they are not proper objects of mercy, since they were never miserable or fallen.

Mercy therefore especially concerns sinners considered in their guilt, corruption, and misery.

I. THE NATURE OF THE MERCY OF GOD

Mercy belongs essentially unto God.

The Scriptures repeatedly describe Him as merciful.

"The Lord God, merciful and gracious." — Exodus 34:6

Mercy is not to be understood as a passion or emotional disturbance in God, such as exists among men. Human mercy is often attended with grief, anxiety, and inward disturbance arising from another's suffering.

But God is free from all passion and imperfection.

The mercy of God is rather the eternal inclination and disposition of His will to relieve the miserable and succour those in distress according unto His sovereign wisdom and good pleasure.

As God is essentially good, so He is essentially merciful.

Mercy is therefore no accidental quality added unto Him, but belongs unto His very nature.

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." — Luke 6:36

Yet though mercy belongs essentially unto God, it is not exercised equally toward all creatures.

God has mercy on whom He will have mercy.

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." — Romans 9:15

Mercy is guided by divine wisdom, holiness, justice, and sovereign will.

II. THE CAUSE OF DIVINE MERCY

Nothing outside God can be the cause of His mercy.

The misery of the creature cannot move God as though He were passive and changeable like men.

If misery itself were the cause of mercy, then all miserable creatures, including fallen angels and all wicked men, would necessarily partake equally of saving mercy. But this is plainly not the case.

Neither can works, righteousness, or human merit be the cause of divine mercy.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." — Titus 3:5

The objects of mercy are no more deserving than others by nature.

All alike are sinful, guilty, and children of wrath.

Nor are even the obedience and sufferings of Christ the cause of mercy in God.

Rather, the mission of Christ itself flows from divine mercy.

"Through the tender mercy of our God." — Luke 1:78

The incarnation, sufferings, and redemption accomplished by Christ are effects and expressions of mercy, not causes producing it.

The true source of mercy lies wholly within God Himself, arising from His goodness, love, and sovereign pleasure.

III. THE INFINITY AND ETERNITY OF DIVINE MERCY

The mercy of God is infinite because God Himself is infinite.

Its greatness appears especially in the greatness of the blessings bestowed through it.

The gift of Christ Himself demonstrates infinite mercy.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." — Isaiah 9:6

Mercy also delivers from an infinite evil, namely sin and its

everlasting punishment.

Sin, though committed by finite creatures, is committed against the infinite God and therefore deserves eternal punishment.

Yet mercy has provided forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal salvation through Christ.

The mercy of God is likewise eternal.

> *"From everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's mercy is upon them that fear him."* — Psalm 103:17

The covenant of grace, formed before the world began, was founded upon mercy.

Christ Himself was appointed Mediator of this covenant from everlasting.

The promises of grace and eternal life arise from this eternal mercy.

The mercy of God toward His people never began in time and shall never end throughout eternity.

IV. THE IMMUTABILITY OF DIVINE MERCY

The mercy of God is immutable and unchangeable.

Because God Himself changes not, His mercy likewise remains constant.

> *"I am the Lord, I change not."* — Malachi 3:6

Though God may alter His outward dealings toward His people, yet His mercy itself never fails.

He may rebuke and chastise them for their sins, hide His face for a season, and permit them to pass through deep afflictions, yet His covenant mercy remains steadfast.

> *"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee."* — Isaiah 54:7

The manifestations of mercy may vary according unto divine wisdom, but the mercy itself continues eternally the same.

V. MERCY BELONGS TO THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS

Mercy belongs equally unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Father is repeatedly called merciful.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again." — 1 Peter 1:3

The Lord Jesus Christ likewise exercises mercy toward His people. Believers are directed to look unto Him for mercy unto eternal life.

"And of some have compassion, making a difference." — Jude 1:22

The Holy Spirit also displays mercy in helping the infirmities of the saints, comforting them, and making intercession for them.

Thus mercy belongs unto the one undivided divine essence and is exercised by each Person of the blessed Trinity.

VI. MERCY DISPLAYED THROUGH CHRIST

The mercy of God is displayed only through Jesus Christ.

Outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire unto sinners.

Christ is the mercy-seat through whom mercy flows unto fallen men.

God reveals Himself as merciful in and through the Mediator alone.

The publican understood this when he cried:

"God be merciful to me a sinner." — Luke 18:13

All mercy received by sinners comes through the person, obedience, sacrifice, and mediation of Christ.

VII. THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE MERCY

There is a general mercy of God extending unto all creatures.

"The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." — Psalm 145:9

The whole earth is full of His mercy.

The brute creation shares in it through preservation, provision, and care.

God gives food unto beasts, birds, and all living creatures.

Men likewise partake daily of providential mercy.

He gives sunshine, rain, food, health, and countless temporal

blessings even unto the unthankful and ungodly.

Yet there is also a special mercy belonging only unto the elect of God.

These are called:

"Vessels of mercy." — Romans 9:23

They are chosen in Christ, redeemed by His blood, regenerated by the Spirit, and called effectually by divine grace.

Those who once had not obtained mercy now obtain mercy through Christ.

VIII. INSTANCES OF DIVINE MERCY

The mercy of God appears gloriously in election.

Though election properly flows from divine love, mercy is nevertheless displayed in God's determination to save fallen sinners through Christ.

The covenant of grace is another great display of mercy.

Every provision within the covenant — redemption, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, and eternal life — arises from mercy.

Redemption itself especially magnifies mercy.

Mercy provided a Redeemer, sent Christ into the world, and delivered Him up for the salvation of His people.

"Mercy and truth are met together." — Psalm 85:10

The forgiveness of sins likewise flows from mercy.

"According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." — Psalm 51:1

Regeneration also displays wonderful mercy.

God quickens those dead in trespasses and sins, delivers them from darkness and bondage, and reveals Christ unto them as the hope of glory.

Finally, complete salvation and eternal life proceed from mercy alone.

"According to his mercy he saved us." — Titus 3:5

Believers shall obtain mercy fully and openly in the day of judgment when they enter everlasting glory.

Thus mercy accompanies the people of God from everlasting election

unto eternal blessedness.

It is one of the brightest manifestations of the divine goodness and one of the sweetest grounds of hope and consolation unto all who trust in Christ.

Let all therefore adore the riches of divine mercy revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ, and ascribe everlasting praise unto Him whose mercy endureth for ever.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 52 — C.M.
"Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield"

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed." — Lamentations 3:22

Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compelled,
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.

If thou hadst left me thus alone,
I still had lived to sin and groan,
And sink at last to hell;
But now thy mercy sets me free,
And Jesus shall my portion be,
For evermore to dwell.

— John Newton

CHAPTER 15

OF THE LONG SUFFERING OF GOD

The long suffering of God, sometimes called His patience and forbearance, arises from His mercy and is one of the principal displays of it. Wherever God is spoken of in Scripture as long suffering, He is likewise represented as gracious, merciful, and abundant in kindness.

"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering." — Exodus 34:6

The Hebrew expression commonly translated "long suffering" literally signifies "long of nostrils," referring unto the restraint of anger and the delaying of wrath.

In the New Testament the same truth is expressed by words signifying patience, forbearance, and slowness to anger.

God is even called:

"The God of patience." — Romans 15:5

Not merely because He gives patience unto His people, but because He Himself exercises patience and long suffering toward His creatures.

I. THE NATURE OF DIVINE LONG SUFFERING

The long suffering of God must not be understood as a passion or painful emotional endurance such as exists among men.

Human patience often involves inward grief, distress, agitation, or suffering.

But God is free from all perturbation, sorrow, and emotional change.

His long suffering is rather the calm and holy restraint of His anger according unto His sovereign wisdom and pleasure.

It is the delaying of deserved judgment for wise and holy ends.

Long suffering therefore springs from the goodness and mercy of God.

It is not weakness, uncertainty, or unwillingness to punish sin. God possesses full power to execute judgment instantly whenever He pleases.

The exercise of long suffering is temporary in its outward administration.

Mercy itself is eternal, but long suffering, as exercised toward creatures in time, continues only until God's appointed purpose is

fulfilled, whether in salvation or judgment.

II. THE LONG SUFFERING OF GOD TOWARD HIS PEOPLE

The long suffering of God is wonderfully displayed toward His elect people.

The apostle Peter declares that God is:

> *"Longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* — 2 Peter 3:9

This refers particularly unto the beloved and chosen people of God, for whose sake the final judgment is delayed until all are brought unto repentance and salvation.

The long suffering of God appeared remarkably throughout the Old Testament age.

After the fall of Adam, the promise of Christ was immediately given, yet many centuries passed before the Redeemer actually came into the world.

During all this period God forbore with His people, accepted the typical sacrifices appointed under the law, pardoned sins upon the credit of Christ's future satisfaction, and bestowed grace upon believers before the full accomplishment of redemption.

This entire period was a season of divine forbearance.

> *"For the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."* — Romans 3:25

The saints of the Old Testament were justified through the righteousness of Christ to be revealed, and saved through the grace of God in anticipation of the Redeemer who was yet to come.

Thus the long suffering of God appeared gloriously in delaying judgment while waiting for the appointed fullness of time when Christ should accomplish redemption.

III. LONG SUFFERING IN THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS

The long suffering of God appears continually in the calling and conversion of His people.

Before conversion they often live many years in ignorance, unbelief, rebellion, and sin.

Yet God bears with them patiently and preserves them alive until the appointed time of grace arrives.

"The Lord waiteth, that he may be gracious unto you." — Isaiah 30:18

Many whom God intends to save are preserved through dangers, sicknesses, accidents, and sinful courses of life until effectual calling takes place.

Some are converted early in life, while others are called at the ninth or eleventh hour, and some, like the thief upon the cross, at the very close of life itself.

All this displays the wonderful patience and forbearance of God.

The apostle Paul stands as a remarkable example of divine long suffering.

Before conversion he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious enemy of Christ and His church.

Yet God bore with him through all his rebellion and at last showed him mercy.

"For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering." — 1 Timothy 1:16

Paul therefore became a pattern and testimony of divine patience toward sinners who should afterward believe.

The long suffering of God is likewise evident toward the Jewish people.

Though they rejected Christ and remain under many outward judgments, God has not utterly cast them away.

He continues to preserve them according unto His covenant purposes and shall yet show mercy unto many of them in the latter days.

"All Israel shall be saved." — Romans 11:26

IV. THE LONG SUFFERING OF GOD TOWARD THE WICKED

The long suffering of God is also exercised toward the ungodly.

The apostle speaks of:

"The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." — Romans 9:22

God bears with wicked men though they continually provoke Him by sin.

It is astonishing that He does not instantly execute judgment upon them.

That He continues to preserve their lives, grant them earthly blessings, and delay punishment is entirely owing unto His patience and forbearance.

"The riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering." — Romans 2:4

Many wicked men enjoy great prosperity, health, riches, honours, and pleasures throughout much of life.

Yet these outward mercies often lead them not unto repentance but unto greater hardness of heart.

Because sentence against evil works is not executed speedily, sinners often imagine themselves secure and continue boldly in sin.

Nevertheless the long suffering of God serves several wise and holy purposes.

First, it magnifies His justice when judgment finally comes.

The destruction of the wicked appears righteous and deserved after so much patience, warning, and forbearance.

Secondly, God often delays judgment for the sake of His people living among the ungodly.

Thus Sodom would have been spared had righteous persons been found within it.

Likewise the world itself continues until all the elect are gathered in unto salvation.

Thirdly, the patience of God leaves sinners without excuse.

Their impenitence becomes all the more inexcusable after repeated displays of divine goodness and forbearance.

V. EXAMPLES OF DIVINE LONG SUFFERING

The Scriptures contain many remarkable examples of the long suffering of God.

The men of the old world were spared for many years while Noah preached righteousness unto them.

"The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." — 1 Peter 3:20

The inhabitants of Sodom were likewise borne with before sudden destruction came upon them.

Pharaoh received repeated warnings and lighter judgments before final destruction overtook him in the Red Sea.

The people of Israel in the wilderness continually provoked God, yet He bore with them forty years.

The Amorites and Canaanites were spared until their iniquity became full.

The Gentile nations were long endured during the times of ignorance before the fuller light of the Gospel appeared.

Fruitless professors of religion are represented by the barren fig tree which was spared for a season before judgment fell.

Even antichrist himself is permitted to continue only until God's appointed time of destruction arrives.

Thus throughout history the long suffering of God has continually appeared toward both His elect and the wicked.

VI. THE ENDS OF DIVINE LONG SUFFERING

The long suffering of God serves many glorious purposes.

Toward His elect it secures their preservation until the appointed season of grace arrives.

Toward the wicked it magnifies divine justice when punishment finally comes.

Toward the church it provides opportunity for the spread of the Gospel and the gathering in of God's people.

Toward all creatures it displays the riches of divine goodness, patience, wisdom, and sovereignty.

Yet the long suffering of God must never be abused.

Its design is to lead sinners unto repentance.

Those who despise His patience treasure up wrath unto themselves against the day of judgment.

The delay of punishment is no proof that judgment shall never come.

The flood arrived at last upon the old world. Fire descended at last upon Sodom. Pharaoh perished at last in the sea. Jerusalem fell at last beneath divine wrath.

So too all ungodliness shall finally be judged in righteousness.

The long suffering of God therefore ought to lead men unto repentance, gratitude, humility, and holy fear.

Let believers adore the patience of God shown toward them in their unconverted state and throughout all their infirmities since conversion.

And let sinners tremble lest the day of mercy pass and long delayed judgment suddenly overtake them.

"The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy." — Numbers 14:18

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 148 — C.M.
"Great God of wonders! all thy ways"

"The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy." — Numbers 14:18

Great God of wonders! all thy ways
Are matchless, godlike, and divine;
But the fair glories of thy grace
More godlike and unrivalled shine.

Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
In wonders lost, with trembling joy,
We take the pardon of our God.

This dearest attribute of heaven,
That sweetens all the rest,
Nor wrath, nor power, nor wisdom shines
So glorious as thy grace.

— Samuel Davies

CHAPTER 16
OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Having considered the love, grace, mercy, and long suffering of God, we now proceed to consider His goodness, from which all these glorious perfections flow.

That God loves His creatures, bestows favours upon them, shows mercy unto them, and exercises patience toward them, arises from the goodness of His nature.

The Scriptures frequently describe God as good.

"Thou, Lord, art good." — Psalm 86:5

When God proclaimed His name before Moses, this was one of the great perfections declared:

"Abundant in goodness." — Exodus 34:6

The goodness of God is so essential unto Him that many have observed the very name "God" among various nations to be associated with goodness itself.

God is not merely good in some limited sense, but infinitely, perfectly, and eternally good.

I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO HIS NATURE

Goodness belongs essentially unto God.

Without goodness He could not truly be God.

The false gods imagined by men, or the evil deity conceived by certain ancient heretics, cannot be the true and living God because goodness belongs necessarily unto the divine nature.

God is goodness itself.

As He is love itself, wisdom itself, and holiness itself, so He is goodness itself.

His goodness is not something added unto His essence, but is His very Being.

When Moses desired to see the glory of God, the Lord declared:

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee." — Exodus 33:19

This goodness included the manifestation of His mercy, grace, truth,

long suffering, justice, and holiness.

The goodness of God therefore comprehends the fullness of His glorious nature.

God is good in and of Himself.

He does not derive goodness from another, nor participate in goodness communicated by some greater being.

Were this so, He would not be independent, eternal, or supreme.

All goodness originates in God alone.

II. GOD ALONE IS GOOD ABSOLUTELY AND INDEPENDENTLY

Our Lord declared:

> *"There is none good but one, that is, God."* — Matthew 19:17

This does not exclude the Son or the Holy Spirit, for the three Persons possess one undivided divine essence and therefore one infinite goodness.

Rather, Christ distinguishes God from all creatures, none of whom are good independently or originally.

Whatever goodness creatures possess is derived from God.

The holy angels received their goodness from Him.

Adam in innocence possessed goodness because God created him upright.

Believers partake of goodness through divine grace.

Every good and perfect gift comes from above.

Thus all creaturely goodness flows originally from God, who is the fountain of all excellence and perfection.

III. GOD IS THE CHIEF GOOD

God is the supreme and chief good.

Men throughout all ages have sought happiness in wisdom, riches, honour, pleasure, and earthly prosperity, yet all such pursuits fail when sought apart from God.

Solomon himself examined these things thoroughly and pronounced them:

"Vanity and vexation of spirit."

True blessedness can be found only in God.

"Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." — Psalm 144:15

Good men, having learned the emptiness of created things, long after God Himself.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." — Psalm 73:25

The light of God's countenance gives greater joy than all worldly abundance.

Earthly comforts are uncertain and temporary, but God Himself is the everlasting portion of His people.

IV. THERE IS NOTHING EVIL IN GOD

There is nothing evil, unjust, or impure in God.

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." — 1 John 1:5

He is perfectly holy, righteous, and true.

God is not the author of sin.

He neither tempts men unto evil nor approves of wickedness.

"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." — James 1:13

Though sin occurs according unto His permissive will and sovereign decree, God Himself remains perfectly holy.

He wisely overrules sin for good while remaining untouched by evil.

The selling of Joseph by his brethren, though sinful in them, was overruled by God for great good.

Likewise the crucifixion of Christ, though committed by wicked hands, fulfilled the holy counsel of God for the salvation of His people.

The punishments and afflictions sent by God are not evil in themselves, but righteous acts of justice and wise fatherly discipline.

All afflictions appointed unto believers work together for their good.

V. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS INFINITE

The goodness of God is infinite and beyond all comprehension.

Its greatness cannot fully be expressed by men or angels.

Finite creatures cannot measure the height, depth, length, and

breadth of divine goodness.

No addition can ever be made unto it, nor can it ever be diminished.

Creatures contribute nothing unto God.

"Who hath first given to him?" — Romans 11:35

All goodness remains eternally full and inexhaustible within Him.

VI. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS IMMUTABLE AND ETERNAL

The goodness of creatures often changes and fades.

Human goodness is unstable and imperfect.

But the goodness of God remains eternally the same.

His goodness never decreases, fails, or alters.

Though He continually communicates blessings unto countless creatures, His fullness remains undiminished.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." — Psalm 103:17

VII. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS COMMUNICATIVE

God is not only good in Himself, but does good unto others.

"Thou art good, and doest good." — Psalm 119:68

The whole earth is full of His goodness.

All creation displays it.

The heavens, sun, moon, and stars provide light, warmth, beauty, and fruitfulness for the benefit of mankind.

The earth produces herbs, fruits, grain, and countless provisions for life.

Animals serve useful purposes according unto divine wisdom.

God preserves all creatures in existence and supplies their daily needs.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee." — Psalm 145:15

Every breath, every meal, every earthly comfort proceeds from divine goodness.

Even wicked men continually partake of God's providential kindness.

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." — Matthew 5:45

VIII. THE SPECIAL GOODNESS OF GOD TOWARD HIS PEOPLE

Beyond His general goodness shown unto all creatures, there is a special and distinguishing goodness bestowed upon His elect people.

"Truly God is good to Israel." — Psalm 73:1

This special goodness appears in election, redemption, calling, justification, sanctification, preservation, and eternal glory.

God chose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world.

He laid up all spiritual blessings for them within the covenant of grace.

He gave His Son to redeem them and His Spirit to sanctify and comfort them.

The Father manifests His goodness in adoption, pardon, and eternal life.

The Son manifests His goodness as the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep.

The Holy Spirit manifests His goodness by regenerating, teaching, guiding, comforting, and preserving believers.

The people of God experience differing measures of spiritual comfort, light, peace, joy, and usefulness according unto His sovereign pleasure.

Yet all alike receive salvation entirely through divine goodness and grace.

IX. THE GOODNESS OF GOD SHOULD LEAD MEN TO REPENTANCE AND PRAISE

The goodness of God ought to lead sinners unto repentance.

Instead, many abuse His goodness and patience by continuing in sin.

Yet every mercy received increases man's obligation unto gratitude and obedience.

Believers especially should admire and adore the goodness of God

shown unto them in Christ.

Every spiritual blessing flows from this fountain of infinite goodness.

God Himself is the happiness, portion, and eternal inheritance of His people.

His goodness shall endure forever.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good." — Psalm 136:1

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 45 — C.M.
"Give to our God immortal praise"

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good." — Psalm 136:1

Give to our God immortal praise;
Mercy and truth are all his ways:
Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat his mercies in your song.

He built the earth, he spread the sky,
And fixed the starry lights on high;
Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat his mercies in your song.

He fills the sun with morning light;
He bids the moon direct the night:
His goodness shines through all his works,
And all creation speaks his praise.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 17

OF THE ANGER AND WRATH OF GOD

Besides the love, grace, mercy, goodness, and long suffering of God, the Holy Scriptures also speak of His anger and wrath. These expressions must be understood carefully and reverently, so that nothing unbecoming may be imagined concerning the divine nature.

The anger and wrath of God are often used interchangeably in Scripture, though wrath generally signifies the fuller and more terrible expression of divine displeasure against sin.

I. THE ANGER OF GOD

Certain philosophers of ancient times denied that anger could belong unto God, imagining that all anger necessarily implies weakness, disturbance, or passion. Others denied both love and wrath alike, supposing God to be unconcerned with the actions of men.

But the Scriptures plainly and repeatedly attribute anger unto God.

His anger is said to be kindled against individuals, nations, and sinful conduct.

Yet the anger of God must not be understood as a sinful passion such as often exists in men.

God is an infinite, holy, and immutable Spirit.

He is not subject unto emotional disturbance, inward agitation, or sinful resentment.

The anger of God signifies His holy displeasure against sin and sinners considered as guilty before Him.

All sin is contrary unto His holy nature, opposed unto His righteous will, and contrary unto His perfect law.

God therefore necessarily abhors sin.

There are certain sins which Scripture especially describes as provoking the anger of God.

Idolatry is repeatedly singled out because it attacks the honour and glory of God directly.

Distrust of divine providence, murmuring against God, profanation of His name, false worship, contempt of His ordinances, and all violations of His law are displeasing unto Him.

Likewise sins against fellow men — such as murder, adultery, theft,

false witness, oppression, violence, and covetousness — provoke divine displeasure.

"Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" — Psalm 90:11

When God arises in anger none can stand before Him.

Kings, nations, armies, mountains, and all created power are unable to resist His judgment.

II. THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE ANGER

"God is angry with the wicked every day." — Psalm 7:11

The wicked are continually provoking God because their lives are characterized by rebellion against Him.

Even their outwardly moral or religious actions are unacceptable unto God when performed without faith, grace, or a right heart toward Him.

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination." — Proverbs 21:27

Though God is angry with the wicked, He does not always immediately display visible judgments against them.

Many prosper outwardly for a season.

They possess wealth, health, honour, and earthly comfort.

Yet this outward prosperity must never be mistaken for divine approval.

God is often slow to execute judgment, but His justice shall certainly appear in due time.

Many sinners flatter themselves that peace shall continue while they walk according to the imagination of their own hearts.

Yet eventually divine wrath overtakes the impenitent.

The anger of God is also at times exercised toward His own people.

Aaron, Miriam, Moses, David, Solomon, and many others experienced divine displeasure because of sin.

This does not contradict the eternal love of God toward them.

Anger and love are not opposites in this sense.

A loving father may correct his child while still maintaining true affection toward him.

So God chastens His people because He loves them.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." — Hebrews 12:6

Often believers apprehend the anger of God when He hides His face from them, delays answers to prayer, or permits affliction to come upon them.

Yet these chastisements are acts of fatherly discipline, not expressions of condemning wrath.

The anger of God toward His people is temporary and corrective, whereas His wrath toward the wicked abides continually.

III. THE WRATH OF GOD

The wrath of God signifies the fuller expression of His holy justice against sin.

It is described in Scripture as indignation, fury, vengeance, and consuming fire.

Wrath includes not only God's displeasure against sin, but also His righteous determination to punish it according unto justice.

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." — Romans 12:19

The wrath of God may be considered both in its present manifestations and in its future and eternal execution.

IV. TEMPORAL EXPRESSIONS OF DIVINE WRATH

The Scriptures contain many solemn examples of divine wrath executed in the present life.

The condemnation of Adam for one sin demonstrates the dreadful evil of sin and the righteousness of divine judgment.

Death entered into the world through sin, and all mankind fell under condemnation in Adam.

The flood in the days of Noah displayed the wrath of God against a corrupt and violent world.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven stands as another fearful example of divine judgment against wickedness.

The plagues upon Egypt revealed God's wrath against Pharaoh's rebellion and hardness of heart.

The judgments which repeatedly fell upon Israel in the wilderness, their captivities, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem, further

manifested divine wrath against sin.

Throughout history famine, pestilence, war, earthquakes, and other judgments have likewise displayed the righteous anger of God.

Above all, the sufferings of Christ upon the cross reveal the greatness of divine wrath against sin more clearly than any other event.

When the sins of His people were imputed unto Christ, the sword of divine justice awoke against Him.

God spared not His own Son when He stood in the place of sinners.

If such wrath fell upon the spotless Surety bearing sin by imputation, how terrible must the wrath of God against sin truly be.

V. THE WRATH TO COME

There is also a future and eternal wrath yet to come.

The Scriptures speak repeatedly of:

> *"The wrath to come."* — Matthew 3:7

This wrath begins after death and shall be fully manifested following the resurrection and final judgment.

It is described as everlasting fire, outer darkness, everlasting destruction, and the second death.

Hell itself is the eternal expression of divine justice against unrepentant sinners.

The imagery of fire throughout Scripture signifies the dreadful and intolerable nature of divine wrath.

> *"Tophet is ordained of old."* — Isaiah 30:33

The wrath of God shall continue forever against the wicked.

> *"The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."* — Revelation 14:11

A fixed day has been appointed for the full revelation of divine wrath.

> *"The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."* — Romans 2:5

VI. THE OBJECTS OF ETERNAL WRATH

The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

All men by nature are children of wrath because all have sinned.

Particularly the Scriptures speak of wrath abiding upon those who remain in unbelief and disobedience.

> *"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* — John 3:36

This includes those who reject the light of nature, transgress the law of God, and refuse the Gospel of Christ.

Those who hear the Gospel and yet reject the testimony of God concerning His Son greatly provoke divine wrath.

VII. BELIEVERS DELIVERED FROM WRATH

Though believers were by nature children of wrath even as others, they are eternally delivered from condemnation through Jesus Christ.

God has not appointed them unto wrath, but unto salvation.

> *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."* — 1 Thessalonians 5:9

Christ bore the wrath due unto His people in their room and stead.

By His atoning death He satisfied divine justice and delivered them from the wrath to come.

Being justified by faith in His righteousness, believers are now secure from eternal condemnation.

At times they may fear divine wrath under conviction of sin, affliction, or spiritual darkness, yet in reality there remains no condemning wrath against them.

Their afflictions are fatherly chastisements administered in love.

> *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* — Romans 8:1

The wrath of God against sin has been fully satisfied in Christ for all His redeemed people.

Therefore they shall never come into condemnation, but shall dwell

forever in the gracious presence of God where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 66 — C.M.
"How dreadful is the place"

"Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" — Psalm 90:11

How dreadful is the place
Where God reveals his wrath!
The sinner trembles at his voice,
And fears his angry path.

Justice with lifted sword appears,
And vengeance waits the call;
Yet mercy still invites the soul
To seek the Saviour's wall.

O may we hear thy warning voice,
And flee the wrath to come;
While yet the gospel trumpet sounds,
And mercy calls us home.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 18

OF THE HATRED OF GOD

Having considered the anger and wrath of God, we now proceed unto the hatred of God, a doctrine plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, though often neglected or denied in modern religion.

Many speak much concerning the love of God while refusing to acknowledge that the same Scriptures also speak of God's hatred against sin, wickedness, and impenitent sinners.

I. THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK OF THE HATRED OF GOD

The Scriptures plainly declare that God hates wickedness.

"*Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.*" — Psalm 5:4

"*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*" — Psalm 5:5

God infinitely loves holiness because He Himself is infinitely holy, and therefore He infinitely hates sin which stands contrary unto His nature.

II. GOD HATES SIN

Sin is contrary unto: - the nature of God, - the law of God, - the holiness of God, - and the glory of God.

Therefore God must necessarily hate it.

"All these things have I hated." — Zechariah 8:17

"*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil.*" — Habakkuk 1:13

III. GOD'S HATRED IS HOLY AND JUST

The hatred of God differs entirely from sinful human hatred.

The hatred of God is perfectly holy, righteous, and just.

God hates sin because it is evil.

He opposes wickedness because it contradicts His own perfect nature.

IV. GOD HATES THE WORKERS OF INIQUITY

> *"The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth."* — Psalm 11:5

This doctrine stands plainly revealed in the Word of God.
God's hatred toward the wicked is judicial, holy, and righteous.

V. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMON MERCY AND SAVING LOVE

God often bestows outward mercies even upon those whom He hates judicially.

He gives: - rain, - fruitful seasons, - health, - earthly comforts, - and temporal blessings unto many wicked men.

Yet these outward favours do not prove saving love.

VI. THE HATRED OF GOD DISPLAYED IN DIVINE JUDGMENTS

The judgments of God throughout history reveal His hatred against sin and wickedness.

The Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the overthrow of Pharaoh, and eternal punishment itself, all demonstrate the righteous hatred of God against evil.

VII. GOD'S HATRED AND THE GOSPEL

The doctrine of God's hatred magnifies the glory of the Gospel.

Christ bore the wrath of God in the place of His people.

Thus the justice, wrath, and hatred of God against sin were fully displayed at Calvary.

VIII. THE ELECTING LOVE OF GOD

> *"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."* — Romans 9:13

That any are saved is owing wholly unto sovereign grace.
Election magnifies mercy.

Reprobation magnifies justice.

IX. PRACTICAL USES OF THIS DOCTRINE

This doctrine ought to produce: - reverence, - holy fear, - humility, - repentance, - and gratitude for redeeming grace.

Believers ought therefore to hate sin in themselves and flee continually unto Christ for cleansing and forgiveness.

X. THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOLINESS

Ultimately the hatred of God reveals the infinite holiness and purity of His nature.

God cannot approve evil.

He cannot cease to be holy.

Thus the hatred of God, rightly understood, exalts His holiness, justice, truth, and the glory of Jesus Christ.

Unto God therefore be glory forever. Amen.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 67 — C.M.
"Sinners, the voice of God regard"

"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." — Psalm 5:5

Sinners, the voice of God regard;
'Tis mercy speaks today;
He calls you by his sovereign word
From sin's destructive way.

The Lord is just, the Lord is pure,
And hates the works of sin;
Yet offers mercy through his Son
To cleanse the soul within.

Delay not till his wrath arise,
Nor trifle with his grace;
For they who scorn his holy law

Shall never see his face.

— Joseph Hart

CHAPTER 19

OF THE JOY OF GOD

Joy is frequently attributed unto God in the Holy Scriptures. Yet this joy must not be understood as a passion or emotional disturbance such as exists among men.

Human joy, especially when excessive, often carries the mind beyond its proper balance and composure. Men may become overwhelmed with excitement, astonishment, or emotional transport.

But God is an infinite, immutable, and perfectly blessed Spirit.

Therefore all such expressions concerning divine joy must be understood in a manner suitable unto the perfection of the divine nature.

When joy is ascribed unto God, it signifies His delight, complacency, satisfaction, and pleasure in Himself, His works, and His people.

I. THE JOY OF GOD IN HIMSELF

God rejoices first and chiefly in Himself.

Being infinitely perfect, all-sufficient, and blessed, He possesses complete delight and satisfaction within His own divine nature.

The blessed Trinity enjoys eternal delight, communion, and satisfaction within the divine essence.

The Father delights in the Son.

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." — Matthew 3:17

The Son delights in the Father and willingly performs His will.

"I delight to do thy will, O my God." — Psalm 40:8

The Holy Spirit likewise proceeds in perfect harmony and delight from the Father and the Son.

Since God possesses infinite perfection within Himself, He stands in need of nothing outside Himself to complete His happiness.

All creaturely joy is partial, dependent, and fluctuating. But the joy of God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

II. THE JOY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS OF CREATION

God also rejoices in the works of His hands.

"The Lord shall rejoice in his works." — Psalm 104:31

When God finished creation He pronounced all things very good.

He not only ceased from His creative work, but rested with delight and satisfaction in what He had made.

The heavens, the earth, the sea, the stars, the creatures of every kind, and especially man formed in His own image, all displayed the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator.

The order, harmony, beauty, and usefulness of creation continually declare the wisdom and pleasure of God.

God likewise preserves and sustains all things by His providence.

"He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." — Hebrews 1:3

His continued preservation of creation demonstrates His pleasure in the works of His hands.

III. THE JOY OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE

God rejoices in His works of providence.

All events throughout history occur according unto His eternal wisdom and sovereign purpose.

Though many providences appear mysterious unto men, all are beautifully ordered in the sight of God.

He sees perfectly the harmony, connection, and ultimate design of every event.

The rise and fall of kingdoms, the preservation of His church, the restraint of evil, and the accomplishment of redemption all unfold according unto His wise pleasure.

Nothing takes God by surprise. Nothing frustrates His counsel.

"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." — Isaiah 46:10

The providence of God therefore continually displays His wisdom, justice, mercy, holiness, and sovereignty.

IV. THE JOY OF GOD IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

The greatest display of divine joy appears in the work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

This work was contrived by infinite wisdom before the foundation

of the world and accomplished through the obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.

God delights in this work because through it His glory shines forth most fully.

In redemption the justice, holiness, truth, mercy, grace, wisdom, and love of God are all gloriously manifested together.

> *"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."* — Psalm 85:10

The Father delights in the obedience and sacrifice of Christ.

The Son rejoiced in accomplishing the salvation of His people.

Though He endured sorrow, suffering, contradiction, and death, yet He looked beyond the cross unto the joy set before Him.

> *"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."* — Hebrews 12:2

The Holy Spirit likewise delights in applying redemption unto the hearts of the elect through regeneration, sanctification, and consolation.

V. THE JOY OF GOD IN HIS PEOPLE

God rejoices particularly in His people.

> *"The Lord taketh pleasure in his people."* — Psalm 149:4

Believers are loved, chosen, redeemed, justified, sanctified, and accepted in Christ.

God delights in them not as sinful creatures considered in themselves, but as united unto Christ, clothed in His righteousness, and renewed by His grace.

Their holiness, faith, hope, love, and obedience are all fruits of His own Spirit working within them.

The Lord delights in the exercise of those graces which He Himself has implanted.

> *"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."* — Psalm 147:11

God rejoices over His people with joy.

"He will rejoice over thee with joy." — Zephaniah 3:17

This joy is especially displayed in the conversion of sinners.

The parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son all illustrate the delight of heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

> *"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."* — Luke 15:10

The joy belongs chiefly unto God Himself, though shared by the holy angels.

The Lord also delights in the prosperity and spiritual welfare of His people.

He beautifies them with salvation, supplies their needs, preserves them through grace, and causes all things to work together for their good.

VI. THE ETERNAL JOY OF GOD TOWARD HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE

The joy of God in His people shall continue forever.

Christ shall present His redeemed church before the Father with exceeding joy.

The saints themselves shall enter into everlasting joy and communion with God.

> *"In thy presence is fulness of joy."* — Psalm 16:11

The joy of heaven consists chiefly in the vision, enjoyment, and worship of God Himself.

Believers shall rejoice in the Lord forever, and God shall rejoice in the complete accomplishment of His eternal purpose of grace.

Thus the joy of God is infinite, holy, immutable, and eternal.

It arises from the perfection of His own nature, from His delight in His works, and especially from His gracious purpose accomplished in the redemption and eternal blessedness of His people.

Let all therefore admire and adore the blessed God, who rejoices in Himself and in the salvation of His redeemed people through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER 20

OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Having considered those divine perfections which bear some resemblance unto affections among men, we now proceed to those attributes which may properly be called virtues, namely holiness, justice, truth, and faithfulness. Among these, the holiness of God deserves first consideration.

The Scriptures abundantly ascribe holiness unto God.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." — Revelation 4:8

He is frequently called "the Holy One" and "the Holy One of Israel."

Without holiness God would not be the infinitely perfect Being that He is. Unholiness is the imperfection and corruption of rational creatures, as seen in fallen angels and sinful men. But God is infinitely pure, righteous, and undefiled.

"His work is perfect." — Deuteronomy 32:4

I. THE NATURE OF DIVINE HOLINESS

Holiness is the purity, rectitude, and perfection of the divine nature.

God is entirely free from every stain, impurity, corruption, or moral defect.

"He is light, and in him is no darkness at all." — 1 John 1:5

His thoughts, purposes, affections, words, and works are all perfectly pure.

He is of purer eyes than to behold evil with approval or delight.

There can never arise within Him even the smallest inclination unto sin.

The holiness of God is not merely one attribute among many, but gives beauty and glory unto all His perfections.

Wisdom without holiness would become mere cunning. Power without holiness would become tyranny. Justice without holiness would become cruelty.

But all the attributes of God are exercised in perfect holiness.

"Glorious in holiness." — Exodus 15:11

For this reason the holiness of God is often called the beauty of the Lord.

It is the splendour and harmony of His entire divine nature.

II. THE HOLINESS OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL, INFINITE, AND IMMUTABLE

Holiness belongs essentially unto God.

He is not merely holy by participation, imitation, or gift, as creatures are, but is holiness itself.

When God swears by His holiness, He effectively swears by Himself.

"Once have I sworn by my holiness." — Psalm 89:35

The holiness of creatures is limited and changeable.

Holy angels were created upright, yet many fell from their original purity.

Man likewise was created upright but fell into sin.

Even believers experience varying degrees in the exercise of holiness throughout this life.

But God remains eternally and immutably holy.

There is no variableness in Him.

His holiness cannot increase because it is already infinite and perfect. Neither can it diminish.

When men are commanded to sanctify the Lord or hallow His name, the meaning is not that God may become more holy, but that His holiness may be acknowledged, honoured, declared, and worshipped.

III. GOD ALONE IS HOLY IN THE HIGHEST SENSE

"There is none holy as the Lord." — 1 Samuel 2:2

Creatures may possess derived holiness, but God alone possesses holiness essentially, independently, infinitely, and immutably.

The holiness of angels and saints is but a faint reflection of His infinite purity.

The holy angels themselves veil their faces before Him while crying:

"Holy, holy, holy." — Isaiah 6:3

All creaturely holiness flows originally from God as its fountain and source.

IV. THE HOLINESS OF THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS

Holiness belongs equally unto each Person of the blessed Trinity.

The Father is holy.

"Holy Father." — John 17:11

The Son likewise is holy.

He is repeatedly called:

"The Holy One of God." — Luke 4:34

And also:

"The Holy One of Israel."

The Son is holy not merely in His human nature, but in His divine nature also, possessing the same pure and holy essence as the Father.

His human nature itself was perfectly holy, conceived by the Holy Ghost and free from all corruption of sin.

As Mediator He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

The Holy Spirit likewise is holy essentially and eternally.

His very title continually declares this truth.

He is called the Holy Spirit because holiness belongs unto His nature and because He is the Author of holiness within the people of God.

He sanctifies believers, implants grace within them, convicts them of sin, and leads them in paths of holiness.

The repeated cry:

"Holy, holy, holy." — Isaiah 6:3

has often been understood by divines as declaring the holiness of the three divine Persons in the unity of the Godhead.

V. THE HOLINESS OF GOD DISPLAYED IN CREATION

The holiness of God appears in the works of creation.

When God finished creation He pronounced all things very good.

There was no impurity, corruption, or disorder in the original creation as it came from His hand.

The holy angels were created upright and pure.

Man likewise was made in the image of God, which especially included holiness and righteousness.

God also gave unto man a holy, just, and good law suited unto his original upright condition.

VI. THE HOLINESS OF GOD DISPLAYED IN PROVIDENCE

The holiness of God also appears throughout His providence.

Though many providential dealings are difficult for men fully to understand, there is never anything sinful or unjust in God Himself.

The chief objection raised against divine holiness concerns the existence of sin within the world.

But though God permits sin according unto His sovereign will, He is never the author of sin.

He neither commands, approves, nor delights in evil.

Rather, He forbids sin, condemns it, punishes it, and overrules it for wise and holy purposes.

The sins of Joseph's brethren, the fall of Adam, and above all the crucifixion of Christ, were all overruled for great good while God Himself remained perfectly holy.

VII. THE HOLINESS OF GOD DISPLAYED IN GRACE AND SALVATION

The holiness of God shines gloriously in all His acts of grace.

Election itself is connected with holiness.

> *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy."* — Ephesians 1:4

God not only appoints His people unto salvation, but unto holiness as the way and evidence of it.

The covenant of grace likewise contains abundant provision for the sanctification of believers.

> *"I will put my spirit within you."* — Ezekiel 36:27

The promises of God encourage believers unto holiness of heart and life.

Justification also honours divine holiness.

Though God justifies the ungodly, He does so only through the righteousness of Christ imputed unto them.

The law is not weakened thereby, but established and magnified.

The holiness of God is further displayed in adoption, pardon, sanctification, perseverance, and every part of salvation.

VIII. THE HOLINESS OF CHRIST

The holiness of Christ appears in all His offices and works.

As Prophet, His doctrine is perfectly pure and holy.

As Priest, He offered Himself unto God without spot.

As King, He rules in righteousness and holiness.

He came to redeem His people from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

His church shall finally be presented unto Himself without spot or wrinkle.

IX. THE HOLINESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The holiness of the Holy Spirit especially appears in the work of sanctification.

He convinces sinners of sin, regenerates the hearts of the elect, implants holy principles within them, purifies their hearts by faith, and carries forward the work of grace unto completion.

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." — Hebrews 12:14

All true holiness in believers is the fruit of the Spirit.

Thus the holiness of God appears throughout creation, providence, redemption, justification, sanctification, and eternal glory.

God alone is infinitely, essentially, eternally, and immutably holy.

Let all therefore worship and adore the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and seek through grace to be holy as He is holy.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 13 — C.M.
"Holy and reverend is the name"

"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts." — Isaiah 6:3

Holy and reverend is the name
Of our eternal King;
"Thrice holy Lord," the angels cry,
While heaven with praises ring.

The deepest reverence of the mind,
Pay, O my soul, to God;
Lift with thy hands a holy heart
To his sublime abode.

With sacred awe pronounce his name,
Whom words nor thoughts can reach;
A broken heart shall please him more
Than the best forms of speech.

Thou holy God, preserve our souls
From sin's defiling stain;
And let thy Spirit's sanctifying power
Within our hearts remain.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 21

OF THE JUSTICE OR RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Having considered the holiness of God, we now proceed to His justice or righteousness, one of the most glorious perfections of the divine nature.

The Scriptures abundantly ascribe righteousness unto God.

"Just and true are thy ways." — Revelation 15:3

All rational creatures, whether angels or men, are compelled to acknowledge the righteousness of God.

Even Pharaoh himself confessed:

"The Lord is righteous." — Exodus 9:27

Without justice God could not rightly govern the world nor judge the earth in righteousness.

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." — Psalm 89:14

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL UNTO HIS NATURE

The righteousness of God belongs essentially unto Him.

It is not something added unto His being, but belongs unto His very nature and essence.

God is righteous in and of Himself.

Unlike creatures, He does not derive righteousness from another.

Adam was made upright by God, and believers are made righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ. But God alone possesses righteousness essentially, independently, and eternally.

His righteousness is infinite and immutable.

The righteousness of creatures is changeable. Adam lost his original righteousness, and many angels fell from their holy estate.

But the righteousness of God remains eternally perfect and unchangeable.

"Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." — Psalm 36:6

God is a law unto Himself.

Creatures are righteous according unto some law above them, but

God has no superior rule outside His own infinitely holy nature.

Some things are right because God wills them according unto His sovereign pleasure in matters indifferent or ceremonial. Other things He wills because they are agreeable unto His own holy and righteous nature.

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS

This righteousness belongs equally unto the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father is called:

"Righteous Father." — John 17:25

The Son likewise is called:

"Jesus Christ the righteous." — 1 John 2:1

The Holy Spirit also possesses perfect righteousness, as is evident from His work of convincing men of righteousness and judgment.

Since the three Persons possess one divine essence, they likewise possess one undivided righteousness.

III. THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS

The righteousness of God may be viewed under different considerations.

First, there is the righteousness of His words.

God is perfectly true and faithful in all His promises, threatenings, prophecies, and declarations.

"He is faithful that promised." — Hebrews 10:23

Secondly, there is the righteousness of His nature and actions.

Everything God does is perfectly righteous, holy, wise, and good.

"The Lord is righteous in all his ways." — Psalm 145:17

Thirdly, there is His distributive justice, by which He renders unto every creature according unto His righteous government.

This justice may be considered either as remunerative or punitive.

IV. THE REMUNERATIVE JUSTICE OF GOD

The remunerative justice of God concerns the rewarding of righteousness and obedience.

Yet these rewards are not given because creatures merit them by their own worthiness.

God first freely promises blessing unto His people, and then faithfully fulfils His gracious promises.

"The Lord… hath promised." — James 1:12

The reward of eternal life is therefore of grace rather than debt.

God rewards not human merit, but His own grace working within His people.

Believers receive "the reward of the inheritance" because God has graciously connected grace with glory according unto His covenant promise.

Even the good works of believers arise from divine grace.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." — Philippians 2:13

Therefore when God rewards the obedience of His people, He crowns His own gifts and grace within them.

Moreover, eternal life is granted through the righteousness and obedience of Christ, reckoned unto believers by imputation.

"The crown of righteousness." — 2 Timothy 4:8

Thus even the rewards bestowed upon the saints ultimately magnify the righteousness and grace of God in Christ.

V. THE PUNITIVE JUSTICE OF GOD

The punitive or vindictive justice of God consists in His righteous punishment of sin.

"It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation." — 2 Thessalonians 1:6

This justice has been displayed throughout all ages.

It appeared in the casting down of the angels that sinned.

It appeared in the flood which destroyed the old world.

It appeared in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues upon Egypt, the overthrow of Pharaoh, the captivities of Israel, and countless judgments recorded throughout Scripture and history.

The final destruction of antichrist and the everlasting punishment of the wicked shall likewise manifest divine justice.

The justice of God is not merely voluntary but essential unto His nature.

Many have denied this truth because they reject the necessity of Christ's atoning satisfaction for sin.

But the Scriptures clearly declare that God will by no means clear the guilty.

"The Lord will not at all acquit the wicked." — Nahum 1:3

VI. THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE JUSTICE

The necessity of divine justice appears from several considerations.

First, it is evident from the conscience of mankind.

Even among heathen nations men naturally fear divine judgment and seek means to appease offended Deity.

Secondly, the Word of God plainly declares that God cannot clear the guilty without satisfaction.

Thirdly, the holiness of God requires it.

God hates sin because it is contrary unto His holy nature.

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil." — Habakkuk 1:13

Fourthly, the very nature of sin deserves punishment.

The wages of sin is death.

Sin is rebellion against the infinite Majesty of heaven and therefore deserves righteous judgment.

Fifthly, the law of God requires punishment for transgression.

The divine law carries its sanction with it, namely death for disobedience.

Finally, the sufferings of Christ demonstrate the necessity of divine justice more clearly than anything else.

If sin could have been pardoned without satisfaction, then the sufferings and death of the Son of God would have been unnecessary.

But God spared not His own Son when He stood as the Surety of His people.

The sword of justice awoke against Christ because divine righteousness required satisfaction for sin.

VII. THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE

The justice of God appears throughout His providential government of the world.

Though many providences seem mysterious unto men, God always acts in perfect righteousness.

At times good men suffer affliction while the wicked prosper outwardly.

This has often troubled the minds of believers.

Yet the afflictions of the righteous are not acts of condemning wrath, but fatherly chastisements working for their spiritual good.

The prosperity of the wicked is temporary.

Their judgment may seem delayed, but it shall certainly come.

The final judgment shall fully vindicate the righteousness of God before the whole universe.

VIII. THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN GRACE AND SALVATION

The justice of God shines gloriously in all His works of grace.

Election itself is not an act of injustice, but of sovereign good pleasure.

God might justly have condemned all mankind for sin.

Therefore His choice to save some through Christ cannot be charged with unrighteousness.

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." — Romans 9:15

The imputation of Adam's sin unto his posterity is likewise righteous because Adam stood as the federal head and representative of mankind.

Had he remained obedient, his posterity would have shared in the blessings of his obedience. Therefore it is just that they share in the consequences of his fall.

The justice of God appears most gloriously in redemption through Christ.

A full satisfaction has been rendered unto divine justice by the obedience and sufferings of the Redeemer.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." — Psalm 85:10

Though not all men are redeemed, no injustice is done unto those passed by, since all deserve condemnation.

The righteousness of God likewise appears in justification.

God justifies the ungodly only through the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed unto them.

Thus He remains:

"Just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." — Romans 3:26

The forgiveness of sins also honours divine justice because pardon is granted upon the ground of Christ's blood and satisfaction.

"Faithful and just to forgive us our sins." — 1 John 1:9

Finally, eternal glory itself magnifies divine righteousness.

The saints inherit eternal life through the righteousness of Christ, while the wicked receive everlasting punishment according unto divine justice.

Thus the righteousness of God shines forth gloriously in His nature, providence, law, judgments, redemption, justification, and eternal kingdom.

Let all therefore adore the righteous Judge of all the earth, whose ways are perfect, whose judgments are true, and whose righteousness endureth forever.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 142 — C.M.
"With joy we meditate the grace"

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." — Psalm 89:14

With joy we meditate the grace
Of our High Priest above;
His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love.

Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same.

But spotless justice still remains,
Though mercy now appears;
The blood of Christ alone sustains
The hopes of guilty sinners.

At Zion's hill both grace and truth
In sweet agreement meet;
There justice shines without a stain,
And mercy's work complete.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 22

OF THE VERACITY OF GOD

The apostle declares:

"Let God be true, but every man a liar." — Romans 3:4

Whatever may be said concerning creatures, God Himself is truth and true in the highest and most perfect sense.

Truth belongs essentially unto the divine nature.

God is not merely truthful in His words and actions, but truth itself.

I. GOD IS TRUE IN HIS BEING

The veracity of God first signifies the reality of His existence.

God truly and really is.

"He that cometh to God must believe that he is." — Hebrews 11:6

Creatures possess only a dependent and fading existence in comparison with Him.

"Every man walketh in a vain shew." — Psalm 39:6

But God exists truly, eternally, independently, and substantially.

This is expressed in His glorious name:

"I AM THAT I AM." — Exodus 3:14

This name signifies the truth, eternity, immutability, and self-existence of God.

The veracity of God also signifies the truth of His Deity.

He is repeatedly called:

"The true and living God." — Jeremiah 10:10

This distinguishes Him from all false gods invented by men.

The gods of the heathen are imaginary and powerless idols.

Some are falsely worshipped as gods though they possess no divine nature at all.

Others, such as magistrates and rulers, are called gods only in a figurative or representative sense.

But the Lord alone is truly and properly God.

II. GOD IS TRUE IN ALL HIS PERFECTIONS

All the attributes of God are truly and perfectly what they are declared to be.

He is truly omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, holy, just, wise, good, merciful, and faithful.

What creatures only possess imperfectly or appear to possess outwardly, God possesses infinitely and perfectly in Himself.

This truth belongs equally unto the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father is called:

"The only true God." — John 17:3

The Son likewise is:

"The true God, and eternal life." — 1 John 5:20

The Holy Spirit is called:

"The Spirit of truth." — John 16:13

The veracity of God therefore belongs unto the one undivided divine essence possessed equally by the three Persons of the blessed Trinity.

III. THE VERACITY OF GOD EXCLUDES ALL FALSEHOOD

The truth of God excludes all possibility of falsehood, deceit, or error.

"God is not a man, that he should lie." — Numbers 23:19

Again:

"It is impossible for God to lie." — Hebrews 6:18

Lying, deception, insincerity, hypocrisy, and falsehood all arise from imperfection and sin. But God is infinitely perfect and holy.

He neither deceives nor can be deceived.

At times Scripture speaks in language which, if misunderstood, might appear otherwise.

For example, Jeremiah cried:

"O Lord, thou hast deceived me." — Jeremiah 20:7

But this refers not unto actual deception in God, but unto the prophet's complaint under deep discouragement, or unto God's persuasive call unto prophetic service.

The veracity of God also excludes all insincerity in His declarations.

Some have objected that certain divine statements seem inconsistent with His eternal decrees, such as His declarations concerning repentance or His desire that men should turn and live.

Yet such passages must be understood according unto their proper context and design.

God always speaks truthfully and sincerely.

When Scripture declares that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, it reveals His holy disposition toward righteousness and repentance, while His sovereign decrees remain perfectly wise and just.

IV. THE VERACITY OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL, PERFECT, AND ETERNAL

The veracity of God belongs essentially unto Him.

God is called:

"God of truth." — Deuteronomy 32:4

Christ Himself declared:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." — John 14:6

The Holy Spirit likewise is truth.

Truth therefore belongs unto the very essence of the triune God.

This truth is infinitely pure and perfect.

As there is no darkness in God, so there is no falsehood in Him.

No error, deceit, inconsistency, or defect can exist within the divine nature.

The truth of God is also original and underived.

All truth found among creatures proceeds originally from Him.

Natural truth, moral truth, spiritual truth, and Gospel truth all arise from the God of truth.

The conscience of man bears witness unto moral truth because God has implanted it within human nature.

The doctrines of grace are called:

"The word of truth." — Ephesians 1:13

Satan is called the father of lies because falsehood originates in rebellion against God.

But all genuine truth flows from God Himself.

The truth of God is eternal.

What is true now was eternally true in the divine mind.

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." — Acts 15:18

Creatures know things successively and imperfectly, but all things stand eternally present before the infinite mind of God.

The truth of God is likewise immutable.

Creatures often change, deceive, or fail.

But God remains eternally the same.

"Thy truth endureth to all generations." — Psalm 119:90

V. GOD IS TRUE IN HIS WORKS

The veracity of God appears in all His works.

This includes both His internal works within Himself and His outward works toward creatures.

The internal acts of God, such as the eternal generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit, are true and real acts within the divine essence.

The Father is truly the Father of the Son.

The Son is truly the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit truly proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Likewise the decrees and counsels of God are true and certain.

"The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever." — Psalm 33:11

The outward works of God also display His truth.

Creation itself is real and substantial.

The heavens, earth, seas, stars, and all creatures truly exist according unto the will of God.

This stands opposed unto the false signs and delusions of Satan,

whose works are often deceptive and lying wonders.

The providence of God likewise manifests His truth.

His judgments, deliverances, miracles, and government of the world are all real and righteous.

The miracles performed by Christ and His apostles were true works of divine power, unlike the deceptive wonders of false religion and antichristian delusion.

VI. THE VERACITY OF GOD IN THE WORKS OF GRACE

The truth of God appears gloriously in all His works of grace and salvation.

Election is true and certain.

"The foundation of God standeth sure." — 2 Timothy 2:19

The covenant of grace is founded upon eternal truth and faithfully fulfilled in Christ.

The incarnation of Christ was a true and real assumption of human nature.

"The Word was made flesh." — John 1:14

Christ truly obeyed, suffered, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven.

Justification by His righteousness is not imaginary or figurative, but a true and real imputation of righteousness unto believers.

The pardon of sins through His blood is real and effectual.

Sanctification by the Holy Spirit is a true inward work of grace, not mere outward profession or ceremonial observance.

Adoption into the family of God is likewise true and substantial.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." — 1 John 3:2

VII. GOD IS TRUE IN HIS WORD

The veracity of God shines especially in His Word.

This includes both His essential Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His written Word, the Holy Scriptures.

Christ is the eternal Word who was with God and was God.

He is the true Prophet, true Priest, true King, and true Mediator between God and men.

All truth is revealed and fulfilled in Him.

The written Scriptures are likewise called:

"The scriptures of truth." — Daniel 10:21

They are inspired by the God of truth and therefore entirely trustworthy.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." — 2 Timothy 3:16

The law of God is true, holy, and righteous.

The Gospel is especially called:

"The word of truth." — Ephesians 1:13

Every doctrine, promise, prophecy, warning, and declaration contained within Scripture is perfectly true.

The veracity of God is especially demonstrated in the fulfilment of His Word.

Prophecies are fulfilled exactly as foretold.

Promises are faithfully accomplished.

Threatenings are executed according unto divine righteousness.

The faithfulness of God rests upon His truth.

Because God is true, He must necessarily remain faithful unto all His Word.

Thus the veracity of God forms one of the firmest foundations for faith, worship, hope, obedience, and eternal confidence.

Let all therefore trust in the God of truth, whose Word is certain, whose promises cannot fail, and whose truth endureth forever.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT

Gadsby Hymn 54 — C.M.

"Firm as the earth thy gospel stands"

"God is not a man, that he should lie." — Numbers 23:19

Firm as the earth thy gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust;
If I am found in Jesus' hands,

My soul can ne'er be lost.

His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All whom his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.

Nor death nor hell shall e'er remove
His favourites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must for ever rest.

The promise stands for ever sure,
And never shall remove;
The oath and covenant secure
The objects of his love.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 23

OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Faithfulness is one of the glorious perfections belonging unto God, from which He is frequently called:

"The faithful God." — Deuteronomy 7:9

This attribute belongs essentially unto Him.

Were God unfaithful, He would deny His own nature, which is impossible.

"He cannot deny himself." — 2 Timothy 2:13

Faithfulness is therefore not merely an action of God, but an eternal perfection of His divine essence.

It is infinite, unchangeable, and everlasting.

"Great is thy faithfulness." — Lamentations 3:23

The faithfulness of God surrounds all His works, words, purposes, and promises.

No creature possesses faithfulness in such perfection as God Himself.

Even the holy angels are mutable creatures in comparison with Him.

God therefore puts no absolute trust in any creature, but remains Himself the only perfectly faithful One.

The faithfulness of God has never failed in a single instance and never shall.

"Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you." — Joshua 23:14

Without this perfection there could be no solid ground for faith, hope, confidence, or comfort.

But because God is faithful, His people may safely trust Him in all things.

I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN THE WORLD

GENERALLY

The faithfulness of God first appears in the fulfilment of what He has spoken concerning the world in general.

After the flood God promised that the earth should never again be destroyed by water.

For confirmation He appointed the rainbow as the token of His covenant.

"Neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood." — Genesis 9:11

Thousands of years have now passed since that promise was given, and God has remained perfectly faithful unto it.

Storms, floods, and tempests have often occurred, yet the earth has never again been destroyed by a universal deluge.

The ordinances of heaven likewise continue according unto His faithful Word.

The sun, moon, and stars maintain their appointed courses.

"Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day." — Jeremiah 31:35

Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, all continue according unto the divine appointment.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest… shall not cease." — Genesis 8:22

The providential care of God over creation likewise displays His faithfulness.

He supplies food unto His creatures, sends rain from heaven, preserves life, and sustains the order of the world.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee." — Psalm 145:15

From these continual displays of faithfulness believers may confidently conclude that whatever God has spoken concerning the future shall also certainly be fulfilled.

The world shall indeed one day be judged according unto His Word.

The present heavens and earth shall pass away, and new heavens and a new earth shall appear wherein dwelleth righteousness.

II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD CONCERNING CHRIST

The faithfulness of God shines especially in all that He promised concerning Christ and salvation through Him.

This appears first in the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah.

God declared that Christ should be born of a woman, descend from Abraham, spring from the tribe of Judah, arise from the house of David, and be born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

All these things were exactly fulfilled.

Likewise the sufferings, death, resurrection, and saving work of Christ were all foretold and perfectly accomplished.

> *"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."* — 1 Corinthians 15:3

God was also faithful unto all His promises made directly unto Christ Himself.

He promised to strengthen and uphold Him in the work of redemption.

> *"Mine arm also shall strengthen him."* — Psalm 89:21

Christ trusted fully in these promises and was supported through all His sufferings.

God likewise promised that Christ should not remain in the grave, but rise again the third day.

> *"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell."* — Psalm 16:10

This promise was gloriously fulfilled in the resurrection.

The Father further promised to exalt Christ unto glory at His right hand after the completion of His work.

> *"Sit thou at my right hand."* — Psalm 110:1

Accordingly Christ, having finished redemption, ascended into heaven and received the name above every name.

God also promised that Christ should see His spiritual seed and possess a numerous people redeemed through His blood.

This promise continues to be fulfilled through the conversion and preservation of the elect throughout every age.

III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST

The faithfulness of God shines resplendently in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ is:

"The faithful witness." — Revelation 1:5

He faithfully fulfilled every engagement He undertook as the Surety and Mediator of His people.

He engaged to obey the law on behalf of His elect, bear their sins, satisfy divine justice, redeem them from condemnation, and secure eternal salvation for them.

All these engagements He perfectly fulfilled.

"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." — Hebrews 10:9

He became the Surety of the better covenant and fully discharged every obligation resting upon His people.

The faithfulness of Christ appears in His discharge of every office entrusted unto Him.

As Prophet He faithfully revealed the whole counsel of God.

"All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." — John 15:15

As Priest He faithfully offered Himself without spot unto God and continually intercedes for His people.

As King He governs His church in righteousness and truth.

Faithfulness also appears in the fulfilment of His promises unto His disciples and people.

He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, and it was given at Pentecost.

He promised His continual presence with His church.

"Lo, I am with you alway." — Matthew 28:20

He promised eternal life unto His sheep, and not one of them shall perish.

Thus the faithfulness of Christ perfectly reflects the faithfulness of

V. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE

The faithfulness of God appears gloriously in the covenant of grace made with His elect in Christ.

Every covenant made by God has been faithfully fulfilled according unto its terms.

God made a covenant with Adam, promising life upon obedience and threatening death upon disobedience.

Adam broke the covenant, but God faithfully executed the threatened judgment.

God made a covenant with Noah never again to destroy the world by flood, and has faithfully maintained it.

He made covenant promises unto Abraham concerning his seed and the land of Canaan, all of which were fulfilled according unto His Word.

But above all stands the everlasting covenant of grace established in Christ.

This covenant is:

> *"Ordered in all things, and sure."* — 2 Samuel 23:5

It can never fail because it rests upon the faithfulness of God Himself.

God promises in this covenant to be the God of His people.

> *"I will be their God, and they shall be my people."* — Jeremiah 32:38

This includes His eternal love, gracious presence, protection, preservation, guidance, and everlasting fellowship with them.

He promises to forgive their sins, give them new hearts, place His Spirit within them, preserve them in faith, and bring them safely unto eternal glory.

All these promises are faithfully fulfilled in every believer.

V. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN TEMPORAL MERCIES

God is faithful in supplying the temporal needs of His people.

> *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God… and all these things shall be added unto you."* — Matthew 6:33

He has promised that those who seek Him shall not want any good thing.

This does not mean believers shall always possess abundance according unto worldly standards, but that God shall provide whatsoever

is truly good and necessary for them.

Even afflictions themselves are governed by divine faithfulness.

God has not promised exemption from suffering, but He has promised support under it and deliverance in due season.

> *"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."* — 1 Corinthians 10:13

All afflictions are overruled for the spiritual and eternal good of His people.

VI. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

The faithfulness of God especially appears in spiritual blessings.

He faithfully calls His elect by grace, justifies them through Christ, sanctifies them by His Spirit, and preserves them unto salvation.

> *"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."* — 1 Thessalonians 5:24

He gives His people repentance, faith, holiness, perseverance, and spiritual strength according unto His promises.

He writes His law upon their hearts and causes them to walk in His statutes.

The work which He begins He also faithfully completes.

> *"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it."* — Philippians 1:6

VII. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD CONCERNING ETERNAL LIFE

Among all the promises of God, the promise of eternal life stands foremost.

> *"This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."* — 1 John 2:25

This promise was made before the world began by God, who cannot lie.

Believers therefore possess strong consolation and certain hope

concerning eternal glory.

God shall surely bring all His redeemed people into everlasting blessedness through Jesus Christ.

VIII. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN HIS THREATENINGS

The faithfulness of God appears not only in His promises, but also in His threatenings.

God threatened Adam with death if he sinned, and death immediately entered the world through transgression.

He threatened the old world with destruction by flood, and in due time judgment came.

He threatened Israel with captivity and desolation if they rebelled against Him, and His warnings were exactly fulfilled.

Likewise all divine warnings concerning eternal judgment shall certainly come to pass.

"He that believeth not shall be damned." — Mark 16:16

The delay of judgment must never be mistaken for forgetfulness or weakness.

God remains faithful even when He exercises patience and long suffering.

At times temporal threatenings are withheld upon repentance, as in the case of Nineveh, because repentance was included within the divine purpose and condition implied in the warning itself.

Thus the veracity and faithfulness of God remain perfectly consistent.

The faithfulness of God therefore forms one of the strongest foundations for faith, hope, worship, perseverance, and consolation.

Because God is faithful, His covenant stands sure, His promises cannot fail, His warnings shall certainly be fulfilled, and His people shall never be forsaken.

"Great is thy faithfulness." — Lamentations 3:23

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 53 — C.M.
"Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme"

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." — 1 Corinthians 1:9

Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme,
And speak some boundless thing;
The mighty works, or mightier name,
Of our eternal King.

Tell of his wondrous faithfulness,
His covenant firm and sure;
His promises shall never fail,
His mercies still endure.

His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.

Through every age his truth remains,
Unchanged his love shall stand;
His saints are safe beneath his care,
Upheld by his own hand.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 24

OF THE SUFFICIENCY AND PERFECTION OF GOD

One of the names frequently given unto God in Scripture is:

"Shaddai" — meaning the Almighty or All-sufficient God.

This glorious title reveals both the sufficiency and perfection of the divine nature.

God is sufficient in Himself, sufficient for all His creatures, and absolutely perfect in all His being, attributes, works, and ways.

I. GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT

God is entirely self-sufficient.

He depends upon nothing outside Himself for His existence, preservation, happiness, glory, or blessedness.

He is the first and last of beings.

> *"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."* — Psalm 90:2

Before any creature existed, God existed fully and perfectly in Himself.

Therefore His being does not depend upon creation, nor can creation add anything unto Him.

God is infinite and all-comprehending.

Nothing can be added unto infinity.

Were anything lacking in God, He would not be infinite and therefore would not truly be God.

All excellencies, perfections, wisdom, goodness, power, and blessedness exist infinitely within Him.

> *"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."* — Romans 11:36

God is the chief good and the fountain of all goodness.

Every good and perfect gift comes from Him.

> *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."* — James 1:17

Since all goodness flows from Him, He must possess infinite fullness within Himself.

God therefore cannot stand in need of anything from His creatures.

All creatures depend entirely upon Him for life, preservation, strength, and blessing, while He depends upon none.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit possess within the divine essence infinite delight, communion, satisfaction, and blessedness.

The Father delights eternally in the Son.

The Son rejoices before the Father.

The Holy Spirit proceeds in eternal love and communion from the Father and the Son.

Thus the blessed Trinity enjoyed perfect happiness before ever the world was made and would remain infinitely blessed even had no creature ever existed.

Creation therefore adds nothing unto the essential glory or happiness of God.

II. GOD DOES NOT NEED HIS CREATURES

God does not stand in need of the creation generally nor of men and angels particularly.

He does not need human worship, prayers, praises, or obedience.

> *"Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing."* — Acts 17:25

Men are commanded to worship God because it is their duty and because such worship benefits them, not because God gains anything thereby.

Prayer is appointed for the comfort, dependence, and communion of believers, not because God requires information or assistance from them.

Praise glorifies God before creatures, but adds nothing unto His essential glory.

Likewise the obedience and righteousness of men are not profitable unto God in Himself.

> *"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants."* — Luke 17:10

Good works are profitable unto men, useful unto the church, and pleasing unto God according unto His gracious acceptance, but they add nothing unto His perfection.

Even the holy angels cannot profit God by their service.

Though they continually worship Him and serve as ministers of His providence, they contribute nothing unto His essential blessedness.

God employs angels and men as instruments not because He needs them, but because it pleases Him to do so.

III. THE GLORY OF GOD IN CREATION

All things were created for the glory of God.

> *"Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* — Revelation 4:11

This does not mean creatures increase the happiness or perfection of God.

Rather, creation serves to display and manifest His glory unto intelligent creatures.

The heavens declare His glory unto men and angels, not unto Himself.

God requires no created mirror in which to behold His own perfections.

He knows Himself perfectly and eternally.

Creation therefore reveals the wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and majesty of God unto creatures for their instruction, enjoyment, and accountability.

IV. GOD IS ALL-SUFFICIENT FOR HIS CREATURES

Though God needs nothing from His creatures, His creatures need everything from Him.

God is all-sufficient to sustain, preserve, govern, and bless all things.

He gives life, breath, and all things unto His creatures.

> *"In him we live, and move, and have our being."* — Acts 17:28

He breathed life into Adam and continues to preserve the lives of all men and creatures.

He provides food for mankind, for the beasts of the earth, and for the birds of heaven.

> *"The eyes of all wait upon thee."* — Psalm 145:15

He governs the whole universe without assistance.

Kings reign by His appointment.

Nations rise and fall according unto His will.

Even the smallest events are ordered by His providence.

Not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from Him.

The wisdom required to govern all things infinitely surpasses all creaturely understanding.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" — Romans 11:33

V. GOD IS ALL-SUFFICIENT IN GRACE

The all-sufficiency of God appears especially in the communication of grace unto His people.

He is:

"*The God of all grace.*" — 1 Peter 5:10

All spiritual blessings are stored within the covenant of grace and communicated through Jesus Christ.

The fullness of grace dwells in Christ for the benefit of His people.

"Of his fulness have all we received." — John 1:16

God possesses sufficient grace for all His elect throughout every age and nation.

His grace is sufficient for every circumstance of life.

It supports believers in temptation, affliction, weakness, persecution, spiritual conflict, and death itself.

"My grace is sufficient for thee." — 2 Corinthians 12:9

He supplies all the spiritual needs of His people according unto His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

VI. GOD IS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT

God is a perfect Being, lacking nothing.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is

perfect." — Matthew 5:48

His nature is perfectly simple, pure, spiritual, and uncompounded.

No divine perfection is absent from Him.

The fullness of the Godhead dwells infinitely within the divine essence.

Every attribute of God is absolutely perfect.

His knowledge is perfect.

"His understanding is infinite." — Psalm 147:5

His wisdom is unfathomable.

His power is irresistible.

"With God all things are possible." — Matthew 19:26

His holiness is without the least stain or imperfection.

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." — 1 John 1:5

His immutability is perfect.

"There is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." — James 1:17

All excellencies found within creatures exist originally and perfectly in God.

What creatures possess partially and imperfectly, God possesses infinitely and eternally.

Certain things which appear excellent in creatures would actually imply imperfection in God.

Reasoning, for example, belongs unto creatures because their knowledge is limited and acquired gradually.

Faith belongs unto creatures because they possess incomplete knowledge and rely upon testimony.

But God knows all things perfectly and immediately.

Therefore the absence of such creaturely qualities in God demonstrates His perfection rather than deficiency.

VII. THE PERFECT WORKS AND WAYS OF GOD

Not only is God Himself perfect, but all His works and ways are perfect.

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect." — Deuteronomy 32:4

Creation was perfectly ordered according unto divine wisdom.

The work of redemption accomplished by Christ is perfect and complete.

Providence likewise unfolds perfectly according unto the eternal counsel of God.

Though many providences appear mysterious unto men, all are righteous, wise, and good.

"As for God, his way is perfect." — Psalm 18:30

The law of God is perfect.

"The law of the Lord is perfect." — Psalm 19:7

The Holy Scriptures are likewise perfect for their appointed purpose, being able to make the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Thus the sufficiency and perfection of God appear in His nature, attributes, counsels, works, providence, grace, and salvation.

He is infinitely blessed in Himself, infinitely sufficient for all His creatures, and absolutely perfect in every possible excellence.

Let all therefore trust, worship, adore, and rest in the all-sufficient and perfect God, who alone is worthy of everlasting praise.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 44 — C.M.
"My God, my portion, and my love"

"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." — Genesis 17:1

My God, my portion, and my love,
My everlasting all,
I've none but thee in heaven above,
Or on this earthly ball.

What empty things are all the skies,

And this inferior clod!
There's nothing here deserves my joys;
There's nothing like my God.

In vain the bright, the burning sun
Scatters his feeble light;
'Tis thy sweet beams create my noon;
If thou withdraw, 'tis night.

Were I possessed of boundless wealth,
And called the stars my own,
Without thy favour all were poor;
Without thee I've nothing.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 25

OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD

The Scriptures frequently describe God as blessed.

He is called:

"The blessed God." — 1 Timothy 1:11

Christ Himself is called:

"The Son of the Blessed." — Mark 14:61

The Creator is described as:

"God blessed for ever." — Romans 1:25

The blessedness of God necessarily follows from all His divine perfections already considered.

He who is eternal, infinite, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, just, wise, all-sufficient, and perfect must necessarily be infinitely and eternally blessed.

The blessedness of God may therefore be considered both in Himself and as the source of blessedness unto His creatures.

I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD CONSISTS FIRST IN FREEDOM FROM ALL EVIL

The blessedness of God includes complete freedom from every evil.

Most especially, He is entirely free from sin, which is the greatest of all evils.

Sin is the source of all misery, confusion, sorrow, disorder, suffering, and ruin among creatures.

It brought destruction upon fallen angels.

It ruined mankind in Adam.

It continually disturbs the peace and comfort even of believers in this present life.

But God is infinitely holy and untouched by all evil.

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity." — Deuteronomy 32:4

There is no darkness in Him.

No impurity, corruption, or sinful inclination can ever arise within the divine nature.

His holiness forms part of His infinite blessedness.

The holy angels are blessed because they are holy.

The glorified saints shall be perfectly blessed because they shall be perfectly holy.

How much more therefore must God Himself be infinitely blessed in His own perfect holiness.

God is likewise free from temptation unto evil.

"God cannot be tempted with evil." — James 1:13

Believers often suffer grievously through temptations, spiritual conflicts, doubts, fears, and assaults from Satan.

But none of these things can disturb the eternal blessedness of God.

He is above all danger, weakness, confusion, and assault

II. GOD IS FREE FROM ALL IMPERFECTION AND DISTURBANCE

The blessedness of God also consists in perfect freedom from all weakness, ignorance, disappointment, frustration, grief, or inward disturbance.

Men often become unhappy through ignorance, error, deception, oppression, or inability to accomplish their desires.

But none of these things can affect God.

His knowledge is perfect.

Nothing can surprise Him.

Nothing can deceive Him.

Nothing can hinder or frustrate His purposes.

"There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord." — Proverbs 21:30

His power is infinite and irresistible.

No creature can injure Him, overthrow Him, or disturb His peace.

There are no passions or inward emotional disturbances in God such as exist among men.

Scripture indeed speaks of grief, anger, jealousy, and similar expressions concerning God, but these are spoken after the manner

of men in order to reveal divine actions and judgments unto human understanding.

God Himself remains eternally and immutably blessed.

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD CONSISTS IN THE POSSESSION OF ALL GOOD

The blessedness of God consists not only in freedom from evil, but also in the infinite possession of all good.

God possesses within Himself every possible perfection and excellence.

He is the fountain of all goodness.

"All good things come from thee." — compare James 1:17

He stands in need of nothing.

He is perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

All creatures receive from Him, while He receives from none.

God is the chief good.

All created happiness is but a faint reflection of the infinite blessedness found in Him alone.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." — Psalm 73:25

Whatever men commonly seek as happiness exists perfectly and infinitely in God.

Does happiness consist in dominion and majesty? God is the sovereign Lord over all.

"The blessed and only Potentate." — 1 Timothy 6:15

Does happiness consist in riches? All the treasures of creation belong unto Him.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord." — Haggai 2:8

Does happiness consist in wisdom and knowledge? God possesses infinite wisdom and understanding.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" — Romans 11:33

Does happiness consist in strength and power? God is almighty.

"With God all things are possible." — Matthew 19:26

Does happiness consist in joy and pleasure? In the divine presence there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

"In thy presence is fulness of joy." — Psalm 16:11

Every created excellence exists infinitely and perfectly in God Himself.

IV. GOD KNOWS PERFECTLY HIS OWN BLESSEDNESS

Knowledge is necessary unto enjoyment.

A creature cannot delight in what it does not know.

God perfectly knows His own infinite excellencies and therefore perfectly enjoys them.

His understanding is infinite and immediate.

Unlike creatures, God does not learn gradually nor reason from ignorance unto knowledge.

All things are eternally and perfectly known unto Him.

Thus His blessedness is complete, conscious, and eternal.

V. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD IS INDEPENDENT

The blessedness of creatures is dependent.

Angels and men possess only what God gives them.

But the blessedness of God is entirely independent.

He derives nothing from another.

He possesses all blessedness within Himself.

"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." — Romans 11:36

His happiness can neither increase nor diminish.

No event can add unto His perfection.

No creature can lessen His blessedness.

VI. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD IS ETERNAL

The blessedness of God is everlasting.

"God blessed for ever." — Romans 9:5

All creaturely happiness is temporary and uncertain.

Earthly joys fade away.

Even the happiness of glorified creatures depends entirely upon the sustaining grace of God.

But the blessedness of God neither changes nor ends.

Were it possible for His happiness to cease, He would cease to be God.

But He remains eternally the same.

VII. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSEDNESS IN CREATURES

The blessedness of angels and men proceeds entirely from God.

Holy angels possess wisdom, holiness, strength, and joy because these have been communicated unto them by God.

The temporal blessings enjoyed by men also come from Him.

Life, health, food, clothing, peace, family, and earthly mercies are all gifts of divine goodness.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." — Psalm 68:19

The spiritual blessedness of believers especially flows from God.

He Himself is their covenant God and everlasting portion.

They possess Christ and all spiritual blessings in Him.

They receive pardon, righteousness, peace, joy, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life through sovereign grace.

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." — Romans 4:8

Their eternal blessedness in heaven shall likewise consist in communion with God, likeness unto Him, and the vision of His glory.

VIII. GOD HIMSELF IS THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS PEOPLE

God not only bestows blessedness, but is Himself the blessedness of His people.

The saints are made happy through likeness unto Him.

This likeness begins in regeneration and shall be perfected in glory.

Believers are also blessed through communion with God.

"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." — 1 John 1:3

The ultimate blessedness of heaven shall consist chiefly in the enjoyment of God Himself.

The saints shall behold His glory, dwell continually in His presence, and enjoy everlasting communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." — 1 Corinthians 13:12

This vision of God has long been called the beatific vision because it constitutes the highest and fullest blessedness of redeemed creatures.

IX. GOD IS DECLARED BLESSED BY ALL HIS CREATURES

All holy creatures acknowledge and celebrate the blessedness of God.

Angels continually praise Him.

"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him." — Revelation 5:13

Believers likewise bless His holy name.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul." — Psalm 103:1

This blessing of God does not mean creatures add anything unto His blessedness.

Rather, they acknowledge, admire, proclaim, and celebrate the infinite blessedness already existing within Him.

Thus the blessedness of God stands as the crown and conclusion of all His divine perfections.

He is infinitely blessed in Himself, the source of all blessedness unto His creatures, and the everlasting happiness of His redeemed people.

Let all therefore adore and bless the eternally blessed God, whose fullness, glory, goodness, and joy endure forever.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 46 — C.M.
"O happy saints, who dwell in light"

"Blessed be the LORD for evermore." — Psalm 89:52

O happy saints, who dwell in light,
And praise around the throne;
Who see the glory of their God,
And make his bliss their own.

His presence fills their souls with joy,
And everlasting peace;
Eternal pleasures in his love
For evermore increase.

The blessed God, in full delight,
Possesses all his will;
Infinite goodness, truth, and love,
His holy being fill.

His people, gathered near his throne,
Shall share that joy divine;
And in the vision of his face
Eternal glories shine.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 26

OF THE UNITY OF GOD

Having considered the attributes and perfections of God, we now proceed to the great and foundational doctrine of the unity of the divine Being.

The Scriptures plainly declare that there is but one God.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." — Deuteronomy 6:4

This truth is one of the first principles both of reason and revelation.

As it is folly to deny the existence of God, so it is equally irrational to imagine a plurality of gods.

If God were not one, He would not truly be God.

The doctrine of one God stands at the very foundation of all true religion, worship, faith, and obedience.

"Our God is one Lord." — Mark 12:29

I. THE UNITY OF GOD REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE

The Old and New Testaments repeatedly affirm the unity of God.

"Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." — Isaiah 43:10

"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." — Isaiah 44:6

"There is none else beside him." — Deuteronomy 4:35

The New Testament speaks with equal clarity.

"There is none other God but one." — 1 Corinthians 8:4

"One God and Father of all." — Ephesians 4:6

"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men." — 1 Timothy 2:5

Even the devils themselves acknowledge this truth.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." — James 2:19

Thus the unity of God is testified by prophets, apostles, angels, saints, and even by fallen spirits.

II. THE UNITY OF GOD PROVED FROM HIS NATURE

The unity of God may also be demonstrated from His divine perfections.

First, God is a necessary Being.

He exists necessarily and eternally.

His existence does not arise from another, nor from His own will considered as preceding His existence.

If there were more than one necessary and independent Being, no reason could be given why one should differ from another.

Necessary existence therefore belongs unto one infinite Being alone.

Secondly, God is the first Cause of all things.

All created things depend upon Him for their existence.

"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." — Romans 11:36

There cannot be two first causes, for one would necessarily limit or depend upon the other.

Thirdly, God is infinite.

An infinite Being cannot be multiplied.

If there were two infinites, either one would include the other, in which case the included one would not truly be infinite, or neither would comprehend the other, in which case neither would be infinite.

Therefore there can be but one infinite God.

Fourthly, God is almighty.

There cannot be two omnipotent beings.

If one could resist the other, then one would not truly be almighty.

But God declares Himself:

"The Almighty." — Revelation 1:8

Therefore there is but one almighty God.

Fifthly, God is absolutely perfect.

A perfect Being lacks nothing.

If there were more gods than one, there must be some distinction between them.

Such distinction would imply either imperfection or superiority.

But imperfection cannot belong unto God, and superiority would make one greater than the other.

Therefore there can be but one absolutely perfect God.

III. THERE IS BUT ONE CREATOR, GOVERNOR, AND LORD

The unity of God further appears from His relation unto the world.

There is but one Creator.

> *"Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?"* — Malachi 2:10

Creation requires infinite wisdom and power and therefore belongs unto God alone.

There is also but one supreme Governor of all things.

God rules heaven and earth according unto His sovereign will.

> *"His kingdom ruleth over all."* — Psalm 103:19

Were there many supreme rulers, confusion and contradiction would necessarily follow.

But the universe displays order, harmony, and wise government because it is ruled by one supreme Lord.

There is likewise but one supreme Lawgiver.

> *"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy."* — James 4:12

All moral authority flows from Him.

IV. FALSE UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE UNITY OF GOD

The doctrine of the unity of God must be rightly understood.

It does not mean, as some ancient heretics imagined, that there is one supreme God with lesser inferior gods beneath Him.

This merely repeats the errors of paganism under another form.

Nor does it mean, as the Sabellians taught, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are merely different names or manifestations of one Person.

The Scriptures plainly distinguish the three divine Persons.

The Father speaks unto the Son.

The Son prays unto the Father.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from both and performs distinct personal acts.

"These three are one." — 1 John 5:7

The unity therefore is not a unity of person, but a unity of essence.

Neither does the doctrine of the Trinity imply three Gods.

The Father is God.

The Son is God.

The Holy Spirit is God.

Yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

The divine essence is one, infinite, indivisible, and fully possessed by each Person of the blessed Trinity.

V. THE UNITY OF GOD CONSISTENT WITH THE TRINITY

The Scriptures which declare the unity of God do not exclude the Son or Holy Spirit from true Deity.

When Scripture says:

"The Lord our God is one Lord." — Deuteronomy 6:4

the Son and Holy Spirit are not excluded, for both are elsewhere called Jehovah.

Christ is called:

"Jehovah our righteousness." — Jeremiah 23:6

The Holy Spirit likewise speaks and acts with divine authority.

The title:

"The first and the last." — Isaiah 44:6

is claimed both by Jehovah and by Christ in Revelation.

Thus the unity of God is entirely consistent with the Trinity of Persons.

VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DOCTRINE

The doctrine of one God is of the utmost importance in religion.

First, it establishes the true object of worship.

The one true God alone is to be worshipped.

"You shall have no other gods before me." — Exodus 20:3

Yet because Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, worship is rightly offered unto each.

Baptism is administered in the one Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." — Matthew 28:19

Secondly, this doctrine establishes the proper object of faith and hope.

Believers are not divided between many gods or competing authorities.

Faith rests entirely upon the one living and true God.

Thirdly, the unity of God promotes unity among believers.

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." — Ephesians 4:5

As there is one God over all His people, so they ought to dwell together in unity, peace, and love.

Thus the doctrine of the unity of God forms one of the strongest foundations of true worship, sound doctrine, holy living, and spiritual comfort.

Let all therefore worship the one true and living God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — unto whom be glory forever.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT

Gadsby Hymn 19 — L.M.

"The Lord Jehovah reigns"

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." — Deuteronomy 6:4

The Lord Jehovah reigns;
His throne is built on high;
The garments he assumes
Are light and majesty:
His glories shine
With beams so bright,
No mortal eye
Can bear the sight.

The thunders of his hand
Keep the wide world in awe;
His wrath and justice stand
To guard his holy law:
And where his love
Resolves to bless,
His truth confirms
And seals the grace.

Through all his ancient works
Surprising wisdom shines;
Confounds the powers of hell,
And breaks their cursed designs:
Strong is his arm,
And shall fulfil
His great decrees,
His sovereign will.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 27
OF A PLURALITY IN THE GODHEAD

Having established the unity of the divine Being, we now proceed to consider the scriptural evidence that within the one divine essence there exists a plurality of Persons.

The doctrine of one God does not exclude personal distinction within the Godhead. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal both truths together: there is but one God, and yet within this one God there exists Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This plurality does not divide the divine essence into several gods. The unity of God remains absolute and perfect. Yet the Scriptures plainly reveal personal distinctions within the one undivided Godhead.

I. THE PLURAL NAMES OF GOD

One of the earliest indications of plurality in the Godhead appears in the very names used of God in Scripture.

The first name given unto God in the Bible is:

"Elohim." — Genesis 1:1

This word is grammatically plural, though commonly joined with singular verbs and adjectives.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Thus plurality and unity appear together from the opening verse of Scripture.

Had Moses intended merely to teach absolute singularity without distinction, he could easily have used singular names alone. Yet under divine inspiration the plural form is repeatedly employed.

This does not establish a plurality of gods, for the accompanying verbs remain singular, preserving the unity of the divine essence. Rather, it points unto plurality of Persons within the one Godhead.

II. THE PLURAL EXPRESSIONS OF GOD

The Scriptures also contain many expressions in which God speaks of Himself in the plural form.

At the creation of man God declared:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." — Genesis 1:26

This cannot properly refer unto angels, for angels did not create man, nor was man made in the image of angels.

Neither is this merely a form of royal speech, for such language was not customary in those ancient times.

Rather, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together acted in the creation of man.

After the fall God again declared:

"Behold, the man is become as one of us." — Genesis 3:22

Likewise at Babel:

"Let us go down, and there confound their language." — Genesis 11:7

And again in Isaiah's vision:

"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" — Isaiah 6:8

In all these passages plurality and unity appear together.

God speaks as one divine Being while yet revealing personal distinction within Himself.

III. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

One of the clearest Old Testament testimonies unto plurality in the Godhead appears in those passages concerning "the Angel of the Lord."

This Angel is distinguished from Jehovah and yet Himself called Jehovah.

The Angel who appeared unto Hagar promised blessings which only God could bestow.

"I will multiply thy seed exceedingly." — Genesis 16:10

Hagar afterward called Him:

"Thou God seest me." — Genesis 16:13

Likewise the Angel who appeared unto Moses in the burning bush is called:

"The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." — Exodus 3:6

This divine Angel also declared:

"I AM THAT I AM." — Exodus 3:14

The Angel who guided Israel through the wilderness possessed divine authority.

"My name is in him." — Exodus 23:21

The children of Israel tempted this Angel, whom the apostle later identifies with Christ.

"Neither let us tempt Christ." — 1 Corinthians 10:9

Thus Scripture distinguishes between Jehovah who sends and Jehovah who is sent, while maintaining the unity of the Godhead.

IV. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit likewise appears throughout the Old Testament as distinct from God and yet truly divine.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." — Genesis 1:2

The Spirit is represented as speaking through the prophets, striving with men, instructing, guiding, and sanctifying.

David prayed:

"Take not thy holy spirit from me." — Psalm 51:11

Isaiah writes:

"They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit." — Isaiah 63:10

The Spirit therefore is not merely a divine influence, but a distinct divine Person.

V. PLURALITY CONSISTENT WITH UNITY

Though the Scriptures reveal plurality in the Godhead, they everywhere maintain the strict unity of God.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." — Deuteronomy 6:4

The Scriptures never teach three Gods, but one God in three Persons.

The divine essence is one, infinite, indivisible, and eternal.

The Father possesses the whole divine essence.

The Son possesses the same whole divine essence.

The Holy Spirit likewise possesses the same divine essence.

The distinction therefore lies not in essence, but in personal relations.

The Father begets.

The Son is begotten.

The Holy Spirit proceeds.

Thus there is real distinction without division, plurality without polytheism, and Trinity without confusion.

VI. THE PLURALITY MORE CLEARLY REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Though the Old Testament contains many intimations of plurality in the Godhead, the New Testament reveals this truth with far greater clarity.

At Christ's baptism the three divine Persons appeared together.

The Son stood in Jordan.

The Spirit descended like a dove.

The Father spoke from heaven:

> *"This is my beloved Son."* — Matthew 3:17

Likewise the apostolic benediction joins together the three divine Persons.

> *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost."* — 2 Corinthians 13:14

Christian baptism itself is administered:

> *"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* — Matthew 28:19

The singular word "name" preserves the unity of the divine essence, while the three Persons are distinctly named.

VII. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DOCTRINE

The doctrine of plurality in the Godhead prepares the way for the full doctrine of the Trinity.

Without such plurality the New Testament revelation concerning Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could not be understood.

This doctrine also preserves the true deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit while maintaining the unity of God.

The Gospel itself depends upon these truths.

The Father purposes salvation.

The Son accomplishes redemption.

The Holy Spirit applies redemption unto the elect.

Thus the whole work of salvation reveals the glorious harmony of the three divine Persons.

Believers therefore worship not three Gods, but one God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The church throughout all ages has confessed this sacred mystery according unto the testimony of Scripture.

Though the mode of the divine existence infinitely surpasses human understanding, faith receives what God has revealed.

Thus the Scriptures clearly establish that within the unity of the divine essence there exists a true plurality of Persons, laying the foundation for the doctrine of the blessed Trinity.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 24 — L.M.
"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"

"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." — 1 John 5:7

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
One in Three, and Three in One,
As by the celestial host,
Let thy will on earth be done.

Praise by all to thee be given,
Glorious Lord of earth and heaven;

Infinite in power and love,
God below and God above.

Saints below with saints above
Join to praise thy glorious name;
Endless is thy wondrous love,
Evermore thy praise proclaim.

— Charles Wesley

CHAPTER 28

OF THE PERSONAL RELATIONS: OR RELATIVE PROPERTIES WHICH DISTINGUISH THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS IN THE DEITY

Having established the doctrine of a plurality of Persons in the one divine essence, we now proceed unto those personal relations and relative properties by which the three divine Persons are distinguished from one another.

The divine essence is one and the same in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The distinction therefore does not arise from essence, nature, power, or glory, but from those personal relations peculiar unto each Person.

These distinctions are revealed in the Holy Scriptures and ought reverently to be received, though the manner of them infinitely surpasses human understanding.

I. THE FATHER DISTINGUISHED BY PATERNITY

The first Person in the Godhead is distinguished by paternity or fatherhood.

The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding.

He is called the Father: - in relation unto the Son, - in relation unto the elect, - and in relation unto creation.

Yet His peculiar personal property within the Trinity is His relation unto the Son.

The Father eternally begets the Son.

This begetting is not an act in time, but an eternal and incomprehensible relation within the Godhead itself.

Thus the Father is distinguished personally from the Son and the Holy Spirit.

II. THE SON DISTINGUISHED BY FILIATION

The second Person in the Godhead is distinguished by filiation or Sonship.

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father.

"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." — Psalm 2:7

This generation is not: - physical, - temporal, - created, - or inferior,

as among men.

Rather it is an eternal, divine, and incomprehensible relation within the Godhead.

The Son possesses the same divine essence as the Father.

He is: - coequal, - coeternal, - and consubstantial with the Father.

The Son is not made, created, or derived as creatures are, but eternally begotten.

Thus He is properly and truly the Son of God.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT DISTINGUISHED BY PROCESSION

The third Person in the Godhead is distinguished by procession.

"The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father." — John 15:26

The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.

This procession is not movement from place to place, but an eternal personal relation within the divine essence.

The Spirit is neither begotten nor unbegotten, but proceeding.

Yet He possesses fully the same divine nature and glory as the Father and the Son.

IV. THESE RELATIONS ARE ETERNAL

The personal relations within the Trinity are eternal.

There never was a time when: - the Father was not Father, - the Son was not Son, - or the Holy Spirit was not Spirit.

These relations belong unto the eternal mode of the divine existence itself.

The Father did not become Father at creation or incarnation.

The Son did not become Son merely by birth into the world.

The Spirit did not begin to proceed in time.

All these relations are eternal and necessary within the Godhead.

V. THESE RELATIONS DO NOT DIVIDE THE DIVINE ESSENCE

Though the Persons are truly distinguished by these relations, yet the divine essence remains perfectly one.

The Father is not one part of God, the Son another, and the Spirit

another.

Each Person possesses wholly and fully the one undivided divine essence.

Thus: - the Father is fully God, - the Son is fully God, - and the Holy Spirit is fully God.

Yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

The distinction therefore is personal and relational, not essential.

VI. THE ORDER AMONG THE DIVINE PERSONS

The Scriptures reveal an order among the divine Persons.

The Father is first in order, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third.

This order does not imply superiority or inferiority of nature.

It concerns only personal relation and manner of subsistence.

The Father sends the Son.

The Father and the Son send the Spirit.

Yet all three Persons are equal in: - essence, - glory, - majesty, - eternity, - and power.

VII. THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST DEFENDED

The Sonship of Christ is not merely figurative, official, or temporal, but true, proper, and eternal.

The Scriptures repeatedly declare Him to be the only begotten Son of God.

> *"The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father."* — John 1:18

Christ was not made the Son of God by His incarnation, resurrection, office, or exaltation.

He was the Son before He came into the world.

> *"God sent forth his Son."* — Galatians 4:4

The Father did not send one who would become His Son, but One who already was His Son.

Thus the Sonship of Christ belongs unto His divine Person and eternal relation unto the Father.

VIII. THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON

The generation of the Son is eternal.

There never was a moment when the Son did not exist.

"In the beginning was the Word." — John 1:1

The Son is begotten, not created.

This eternal generation does not imply inferiority, beginning of existence, or dependence such as belongs unto creatures.

Rather it describes the eternal personal relation whereby the Son subsists distinctly from the Father while possessing the same divine essence.

IX. THE OPERATIONS OF THE TRINITY

Though distinguished personally, the divine Persons work inseparably in all outward acts toward creation.

The works of God outside Himself are undivided.

Thus: - the Father creates, - the Son creates, - and the Spirit creates.

Likewise in redemption: - the Father elects, - the Son redeems, - and the Spirit applies salvation.

Yet the whole Trinity acts harmoniously and inseparably in every divine work.

X. THE MYSTERY AND IMPORTANCE OF THIS DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the Trinity contains mysteries beyond the comprehension of finite creatures.

Human reason cannot fully comprehend the mode of the divine existence.

Yet faith receives what God has revealed in Scripture.

This doctrine is foundational unto the Christian faith.

Without the Trinity: - there could be no incarnation, - no mediation, - no redemption, - no effectual calling, - and no true Gospel.

Thus the Scriptures reveal one God existing eternally in three distinct Persons distinguished by their personal relations and relative properties.

Unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit, be glory forever. Amen.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 25 — L.M.
"Hail, holy, holy, holy Lord"

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." — Matthew 28:19

Hail, holy, holy, holy Lord!
Be endless praise to thee accord;
Supreme in majesty thou art,
And reignest over every heart.

Father of mercies, God of grace,
We worship in thy holy place;
The eternal Son we now adore,
And Holy Ghost for evermore.

One glorious God, in Persons Three,
Eternal praise be given to thee;
Thy saints below and saints above
Unite to sing redeeming love.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 29

OF THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE FATHER

Having considered the unity of God, the Trinity of Persons in the divine essence, the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit, we now proceed to consider each divine Person more particularly.

We begin with the Father.

The Father is truly and properly God, possessing fully and eternally the one undivided divine essence together with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Father is not God in a higher sense than the Son or Spirit, nor are the Son and Spirit dependent deities beneath Him. Rather, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in nature, glory, majesty, and perfection.

Yet the Father is distinguished personally by this relative property: that He eternally begets the Son.

I. THE FATHER IS A DISTINCT DIVINE PERSON

The Father is not merely another name for the divine essence in general, nor merely a different manifestation of the Son or Spirit.

He is truly a distinct Person within the Godhead.

Scripture plainly distinguishes Him from the Son.

> *"The Father loveth the Son."* — John 3:35

The Son prays unto the Father.

> *"Father, glorify thy Son."* — John 17:1

The Father sends the Son into the world.

> *"God sent forth his Son."* — Galatians 4:4

The Father also sends the Holy Spirit.

> *"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name."* — John 14:26

Thus the Father is personally distinct from both the Son and the Spirit.

Yet these distinctions do not divide the divine essence.
The Father remains one God with the Son and Holy Spirit.

II. THE FATHER IS TRULY GOD

The Scriptures abundantly declare the deity of the Father.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father." — Romans 1:7

The Father possesses all divine names and titles.
He is called Jehovah, Lord, God Almighty, the Most High, the eternal God, and the living God.
The Father likewise possesses all divine attributes.
He is eternal.

"The everlasting God." — Isaiah 40:28

He is omnipotent.

"With God all things are possible." — Matthew 19:26

He is omniscient.

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." — Matthew 6:8

He is omnipresent.

"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." — Jeremiah 23:24

He is infinitely holy, wise, righteous, good, faithful, and perfect.
The Father also performs divine works.
He created all things.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." — Genesis 1:1

He preserves and governs the universe.

"My Father worketh hitherto." — John 5:17

He raises the dead and gives life.

"The Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them." — John 5:21

The Father furthermore receives divine worship.

Believers pray unto Him, praise Him, trust in Him, and worship Him as God.

III. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

The Scriptures speak of God as Father in several different senses.

First, God is called the Father of creation because He created all things.

> *"Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?"* — Malachi 2:10

He is especially called the Father of spirits, having created the souls of men.

Secondly, God is called Father in relation unto providence and care over His creatures.

He nourishes, protects, governs, and sustains them.

Thirdly, God is called the Father of believers by grace and adoption.

> *"Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."* — Romans 8:15

Believers are adopted into His family through Jesus Christ and enjoy the privileges of children.

Yet none of these senses constitute the peculiar Fatherhood distinguishing the first Person in the Trinity.

The true and eternal Fatherhood of God consists in this: He is eternally the Father of the Son.

IV. THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Father is repeatedly described as:

> *"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* — Ephesians 1:3

This relation belongs unto eternity itself.

The Father did not become Father only when Christ took human nature or entered upon His mediatorial office.

Rather, He eternally begot the Son before all worlds.

The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world.

"Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." — John 17:24

The Son shared eternal glory with the Father before creation began.

The Father therefore is eternally Father because the Son is eternally Son.

This Fatherhood is personal, natural, proper, and eternal.

V. THE FATHER IN THE WORK OF CREATION

Though all external works of God are common unto the three Persons, certain works are often especially attributed unto one Person according unto the order revealed in Scripture.

Creation is frequently attributed unto the Father.

"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." — Romans 11:36

Yet the Father created all things through the Son and by the Spirit.

The Father is therefore the fountain and source, though not apart from the Son and Spirit.

All three Persons acted together in creation.

VI. THE FATHER IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE

The Father shines gloriously in the covenant of grace.

He chose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world.

"According as he hath chosen us in him." — Ephesians 1:4

The Father gave the elect unto Christ.

"Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." — John 17:6

He appointed the Son unto the office of Mediator and accepted His suretyship on behalf of His people.

The Father also promised all covenant blessings unto Christ for His redeemed people.

Thus the Father appears as the gracious fountain of salvation according unto His eternal love and sovereign purpose.

VII. THE FATHER IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

The Father sent the Son into the world.

"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." — John 3:17

The Father prepared a body for Christ.

He laid upon Him the iniquities of His people.

He bruised Him and put Him to grief according unto the eternal purpose of redemption.

Yet this was done in perfect love, wisdom, and justice.

The Father accepted the obedience and sacrifice of Christ on behalf of the elect.

He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him unto glory at His right hand.

VIII. THE FATHER IN REGENERATION AND ADOPTION

Regeneration is frequently attributed unto the Father.

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." — James 1:18

Believers are said to be born of God.

The Father grants them spiritual life through the operation of His Spirit.

Adoption also especially manifests the grace of the Father.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." — 1 John 3:1

Believers are received into His family, given the privileges of sons, and made heirs together with Christ.

IX. THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

The love of the Father is one of the sweetest themes in all the Gospel.

The Father loved His elect before the foundation of the world.

He loved them freely, sovereignly, and eternally.

This love appears in election, in the gift of Christ, in adoption, in forgiveness, and in all spiritual blessings.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." — John 3:16

The Father's love is immutable and everlasting.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love." — Jeremiah 31:3

Believers therefore rest securely in the eternal love of the Father revealed through Christ.

X. THE GLORY OF THE FATHER

The glory of the Father appears throughout all His works and ways.

The Son glorified the Father upon earth.

"I have glorified thee on the earth." — John 17:4

The Spirit likewise glorifies the Father together with the Son.

All worship ultimately terminates in the glory of the triune God.

Believers are taught to pray:

"Our Father which art in heaven." — Matthew 6:9

This title encourages reverence, confidence, love, submission, and holy obedience.

The Father cares for His people with perfect wisdom and tenderness.

As an earthly father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.

Thus the personality and deity of the Father stand clearly revealed throughout the Scriptures.

He is eternally Father, truly and properly God, one in essence with the Son and Holy Spirit, worthy of all worship, love, faith, and obedience forever.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 31 — C.M.
"Our heavenly Father calls"

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father." — Philippians 1:2

Our heavenly Father calls,

And Christ invites us near;
With both our friendship shall be sweet,
And our communion dear.

God pities all our griefs;
He pardons every day;
Almighty strength is his to give,
And grace to guide our way.

Though fathers may forget their sons,
And mothers cease to care,
The Lord remembers all his saints,
And hears their humble prayer.

In every time of fear and need
His love shall still endure;
The everlasting Father's care
Stands firm and ever sure.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 30

OF THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE SON OF GOD

Having treated of the personality and deity of the Father, we now proceed unto the consideration of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the second Person in the glorious Trinity.

The doctrine concerning the true and proper deity of Christ is one of the chief foundations of the Christian faith. If Christ be not truly God, then His obedience could not possess infinite value, His atonement could not fully satisfy divine justice, and He could not be the proper object of divine worship.

But the Holy Scriptures abundantly testify that Jesus Christ is truly and eternally God.

I. THE SON OF GOD IS A DISTINCT PERSON

The Son is not merely another name for the Father, nor simply a manifestation of the divine essence, but a distinct Person within the Godhead.

The Father speaks unto the Son:

"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." — Psalm 2:7

The Son speaks unto the Father:

"Father, glorify thy Son." — John 17:1

The Father sends the Son:

"God sent forth his Son." — Galatians 4:4

Thus the Son is personally distinct from the Father, though equal in divine nature.

II. THE SON IS CALLED GOD

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." — John 1:1

"Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." —

Hebrews 1:8

"My Lord and my God." — John 20:28

These testimonies plainly establish the deity of the Son.

III. DIVINE NAMES ARE GIVEN UNTO CHRIST

The names and titles peculiar unto God belong also unto Christ.

He is called: - Jehovah, - Lord, - God, - Emmanuel, - the Mighty God, - and the First and the Last.

"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God." — Isaiah 9:6

IV. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES BELONG UNTO CHRIST

The Son possesses all divine perfections.

Christ existed before all worlds.

"Before Abraham was, I am." — John 8:58

Christ knows all things.

"Lord, thou knowest all things." — John 21:17

Jesus Christ is: "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." — Hebrews 13:8

Thus every divine perfection belongs equally unto the Son.

V. DIVINE WORKS ARE ASCRIBED UNTO CHRIST

The works peculiar unto God are performed by Christ.

"All things were made by him." — John 1:3

"By him were all things created." — Colossians 1:16

"Upholding all things by the word of his power." — Hebrews 1:3

Christ forgives sins, raises the dead, and shall judge the world.

VI. DIVINE WORSHIP IS GIVEN UNTO CHRIST

The worship due unto God alone is rendered unto Christ.

"Let all the angels of God worship him." — Hebrews 1:6

Prayer is addressed unto Him.

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." — Acts 7:59

Believers trust in Him for salvation and eternal life.

VII. THE SON IS EQUAL WITH THE FATHER

"I and my Father are one." — John 10:30

The Son possesses the same essence, glory, majesty, and eternity as the Father.

The distinction lies not in nature but in personality and relation.

VIII. THE INCARNATION OF THE SON

"And the Word was made flesh." — John 1:14

Christ became truly man while remaining truly God.

Thus in one Person are united two natures, divine and human, without confusion, change, division, or separation.

IX. ERRORS CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Some deny His deity.

Others deny His humanity.

But the Scriptures teach that Christ is: - one Person, - possessing two distinct natures, - truly God, - and truly man forever.

X. THE GLORY OF CHRIST

The glory of Christ shines throughout the whole Gospel.

Believers are called to worship Him, trust Him, obey Him, and love Him.

He is the eternal Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners, and King

forevermore.

Thus the Scriptures abundantly testify unto the true personality and proper deity of the Son of God.

Unto Him therefore be glory, honour, dominion, and praise forever and ever. Amen.

❦

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 149 — C.M.
"Jesus, thou everlasting King"

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." — Hebrews 1:8

Jesus, thou everlasting King,
Accept the praise I bring;
Thy boundless love and deity
My grateful songs shall sing.

Before the worlds were made by thee,
Thou wast the eternal Word;
One with the Father evermore,
The everlasting Lord.

Angels and saints around thy throne
Adore thy glorious name;
Salvation, wisdom, power, and grace
Proclaim thy worth and fame.

Though clothed in our poor flesh below,
Thy Godhead shone divine;
The fulness of the Godhead dwelt
Eternally in thine.

— Isaac Watts

CHAPTER 31

OF THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Having considered the personality and deity of the Father and the Son, we now proceed unto the third Person in the blessed Trinity, namely the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit is of the utmost importance, for without His gracious operations there would be no regeneration, faith, holiness, comfort, perseverance, or salvation experienced by fallen men.

Yet throughout history many have denied His true personality and deity. Some have imagined the Spirit to be merely a power, influence, or operation proceeding from God rather than a distinct divine Person.

But the Scriptures plainly reveal the Holy Spirit to be truly and eternally God, one in essence with the Father and the Son.

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A DISTINCT PERSON

The Holy Spirit is not merely an attribute, power, or influence of God, but a true and proper Person within the Godhead.

The Scriptures ascribe unto Him personal properties.

He possesses understanding.

> *"The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."* — 1 Corinthians 2:10

He possesses will.

> *"He divideth to every man severally as he will."* — 1 Corinthians 12:11

He speaks.

> *"The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul."* — Acts 13:2

He teaches, guides, commands, intercedes, comforts, bears witness, and may be grieved.

All such things belong properly unto personality.

The Holy Spirit is also personally distinguished from both the Father and the Son.

Christ declared:

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." — John 14:16

The Spirit therefore is neither the Father nor the Son, but another distinct Person.

Yet He remains one God with them in the same divine essence.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TRULY GOD

The Scriptures not only reveal the Spirit as personal, but as truly divine.

The names of God are given unto Him.

Peter declared unto Ananias:

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" — Acts 5:3

Then immediately afterward:

"Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." — Acts 5:4

Thus lying unto the Holy Ghost is lying unto God.

The Spirit possesses divine attributes.

He is eternal.

"The eternal Spirit." — Hebrews 9:14

He is omnipresent.

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" — Psalm 139:7

He is omniscient.

"The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." — 1 Corinthians 2:10

He is omnipotent, for He performs works requiring divine power.

The Spirit therefore cannot be a creature or mere influence.

III. THE DIVINE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit performs works belonging unto God alone.

He was active in creation.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." — Genesis 1:2

The heavens themselves are said to have been garnished by His Spirit.

He inspired the Holy Scriptures.

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." — 2 Peter 1:21

The Spirit also regenerates sinners.

"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." — John 3:6

Regeneration is a divine work requiring almighty power, for sinners are spiritually dead and unable to quicken themselves.

The Spirit likewise sanctifies believers, implants grace, strengthens faith, comforts the saints, and preserves them unto eternal life.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

The Holy Spirit appears gloriously throughout the earthly ministry of Christ.

The incarnation itself was accomplished through His power.

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee." — Luke 1:35

Christ was anointed by the Spirit beyond measure.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." — Luke 4:18

The Spirit descended visibly upon Christ at His baptism.

Christ also cast out devils through the Spirit of God and offered Himself unto God through the eternal Spirit.

Thus the Holy Spirit was actively engaged throughout the whole work of redemption.

V. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

The church depends continually upon the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit.

He enlightens the understanding unto saving knowledge of Christ.

He convicts sinners of sin.

He grants repentance and faith.

He unites believers unto Christ.

He indwells the saints as His temple.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" — 1 Corinthians 3:16

The Spirit distributes spiritual gifts according unto His sovereign will.

He raises up ministers, equips them for service, and blesses the preaching of the Gospel unto the conversion of sinners.

Without the Spirit all outward means remain powerless.

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT THE COMFORTER

Christ repeatedly describes the Holy Spirit as the Comforter.

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost." — John 14:26

The Spirit comforts believers by revealing Christ unto them, applying the promises of Scripture unto their hearts, strengthening faith, and assuring them of their adoption.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." — Romans 8:16

He assists believers in prayer.

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." — Romans 8:26

He supports them in temptation, affliction, persecution, and death itself.

VII. THE HOLY SPIRIT MAY BE RESISTED AND GRIEVED

Because the Holy Spirit is a true Person, Scripture speaks of men resisting and grieving Him.

"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." — Acts 7:51

"Grieve not the holy Spirit of God." — Ephesians 4:30

Such expressions could never properly apply unto a mere force or influence.

The Spirit is also blasphemed by the wicked.

Our Lord speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as a most

dreadful sin.

All these things further confirm His true personality.

VIII. THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The distinctive personal property of the Holy Spirit is procession.

> *"The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father."* — John 15:26

This procession is eternal and belongs unto the inner relations of the Trinity itself.

As the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, so the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.

This procession does not imply inferiority of essence, but only personal distinction.

The Spirit possesses fully and eternally the same divine nature as the Father and the Son.

IX. THE WORSHIP DUE UNTO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Because the Holy Spirit is truly God, He is worthy of divine worship together with the Father and the Son.

Believers are baptized in His Name.

> *"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* — Matthew 28:19

The apostolic benediction joins the three divine Persons equally together.

> *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost."* — 2 Corinthians 13:14

The Spirit therefore is not an inferior being, but equal in glory, majesty, and worship with the Father and the Son.

X. THE GLORY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Though the Holy Spirit especially glorifies Christ in the work of salvation, yet the Scriptures everywhere reveal His own divine glory.

Without His operations there would be no conviction of sin, no regeneration, no faith, no holiness, no comfort, no perseverance, and no

preparation for heaven.

The entire Christian life depends continually upon His gracious work.

Believers therefore ought continually to seek His guidance, strength, sanctifying influence, and gracious presence.

Thus the Holy Spirit stands revealed in Scripture as a true and eternal divine Person, one in essence with the Father and the Son, possessing all divine attributes, performing divine works, and worthy of everlasting worship.

Let all therefore adore Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — one God blessed forever.

HYMNS UPON THE SUBJECT
Gadsby Hymn 28 — L.M.
"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove"

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." — Acts 5:3–4

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.

Look, how we grovel here below,
Fond of these earthly toys;
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.

In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise;
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.

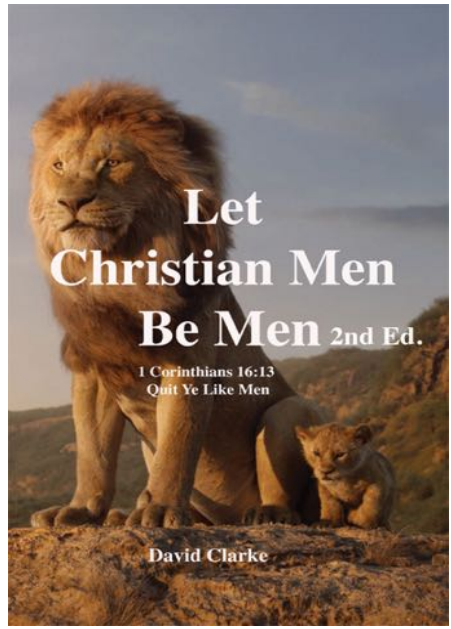
Dear Lord, and shall we ever live
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to thee,

And thine to us so great!

— Isaac Watts

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

LET CHRISTIAN MEN BE MEN



David Clarke

Originally published as *The Bierton Crisis (1984)*, this deeply personal and theological account traces the journey of David Clarke—minister, church secretary, and committed member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a historic Gospel Standard cause founded in 1832.

This book documents a significant crisis that shook the foundation of the Bierton Church in 1984. As doctrinal errors and questionable practices crept into the fellowship, David stood firm in proclaiming the doctrines of grace—particularly Particular Redemption—and affirmed that the gospel of Christ, not the Law of Moses, is the believer's rule of life. His stance led to a withdrawal of fellowship, yet the church never terminated his membership, desiring his return.

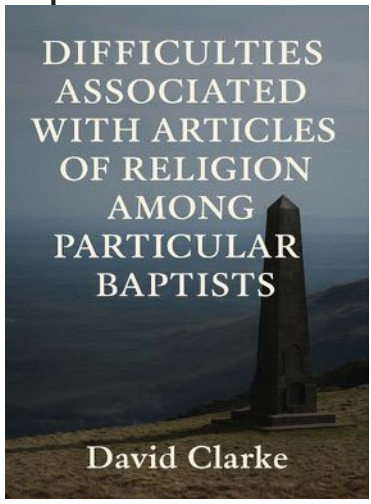
David's testimony not only exposes the theological and ecclesiastical struggles within the church but also chronicles the unexpected closure of the Bierton chapel in 2002, while he was engaged in gospel mission work in the Philippines. Upon returning to the UK, he

discovered that a new, unelected group of trustees had taken control of the chapel, denied his rightful membership, and ultimately sold the historic building as a domestic property in 2006.
This book is both a warning and a call: a warning against doctrinal compromise and a call for ministers and believers to ground their faith and practice in Scripture alone—not tradition, not personal opinion, and not the fear of man.

Let Christian Men Be Men is an appeal to return to biblical conviction, gospel clarity, and godly courage—so that men may truly stand, teach, and live as Christ's ambassadors in an age of confusion.

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION

Among Particular Baptists



David Clarke

This book has been written for those who find themselves troubled, confused, or even discouraged by the Articles of Religion—or Confessions of Faith—that are often required for church membership among Particular Baptists.

Throughout church history, believers have sought to express their shared understanding of the faith through creeds and confessions. While such documents can be helpful in clarifying doctrine, they can also become stumbling blocks when their language is unclear, their assertions go beyond Scripture, or when they demand an advanced theological understanding that many sincere believers may not yet possess. This is

especially true for those new to the faith or those whose consciences are bound by the Word of God alone.

Drawing on personal experience, the author highlights the challenges faced when joining a Particular Baptist church, particularly in regard to conflicting or historically ambiguous articles of faith. The events surrounding the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church in the late 20th century serve as a case study—demonstrating the real pastoral and theological difficulties that can arise when church membership is restricted by confessions that are misunderstood, misapplied, or internally inconsistent.

Yet this book is not a rejection of Articles of Religion altogether. On the contrary, it affirms their importance when rightly used. The aim is not to cast off doctrinal clarity, but to call for honesty, humility, and scriptural fidelity in how churches apply such confessions. The book offers a comparison of four historical Baptist confessions, discusses controversial additions, and explores how such documents should function in the life of a church governed by grace and truth.

May this book serve as a helpful guide to those who, with a sincere desire to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, wrestle with the tensions between confessional loyalty and biblical conviction. Let it also be a call to church leaders to handle such matters with care, patience, and a deep understanding of the Gospel of Christ.

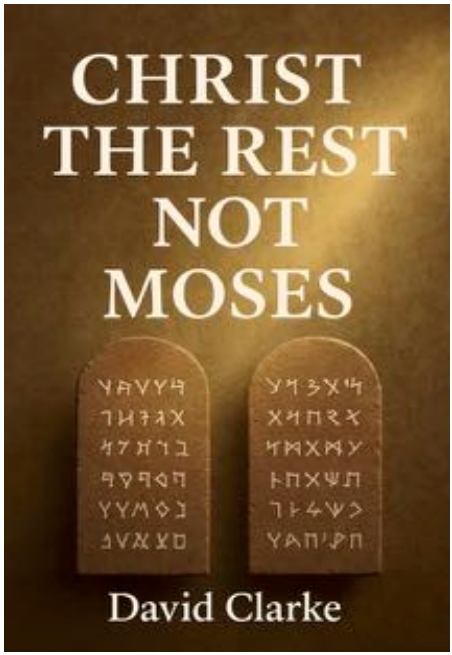
Isaiah 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

Contents

Articles of Religion Important
Authors Testimony
Bierton Particular Baptist Church
A Difficulty Over Articles Of Religion
Bierton Particular Baptists History
1 First London Particular Baptists Confession 1646, 2nd Edition
    The Development of Articles Of Religion,Act of Toleration
    Additions That Are Wrong
2 London Baptist Confession 1689 1
    Notes on The London Baptists Confession1689
3 Bierton Particular Baptists Articles of Religion, 1831
    Difficulties Over Articles of Religion

Notes on Bierton Particular Baptists 1831
4 The Gospel Standard Articles of Religion 1878
Observations of the Gospel Standard Articles of religion
Letter to Mr Role's of Luton Added Articles
My comments Article 32
The Difficulties Of these Articles Proved
Serious Doctrinal Errors Held
Recommendation for Serious Minded
5 Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan 2016
6 Appendix 60
Gospel Standard 31 Articles

CHRIST THE REST, NOT MOSES



By David Clarke
Author of Converted on LSD Trip

"Let us labour therefore… to enter into that rest." – Hebrews 4:11

What is the true rest promised to the people of God? Is it found in

observing days and laws — or in Christ Himself?

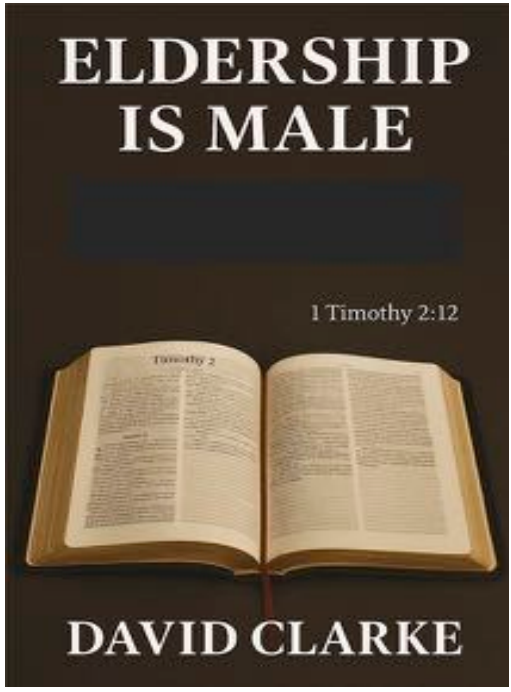
In this bold and thought-provoking work, David Clarke draws from Scripture and personal experience to confront a foundational issue at the heart of Christian doctrine: justification by faith alone.

Clarke, once rejected by a Gospel Standard minister over his understanding of Hebrews 4, writes not to stir controversy, but to call believers back to the simplicity and power of the gospel. With a serious tone, pastoral heart, and unwavering conviction, he urges readers to turn from legalism and shadows to the finished work of Christ.

Written especially for those who love the doctrines of grace, yet feel isolated or misunderstood, this book is a call to clarity, courage, and confidence in the rest that is found in Christ — and Christ alone.

This is not merely a theological issue. It is a matter of liberty, peace, and the very ground of our standing before God.

ELDERSHIP IS MALE



Does the Lord Jesus Christ Want Women to Rule as Elders in His Church?

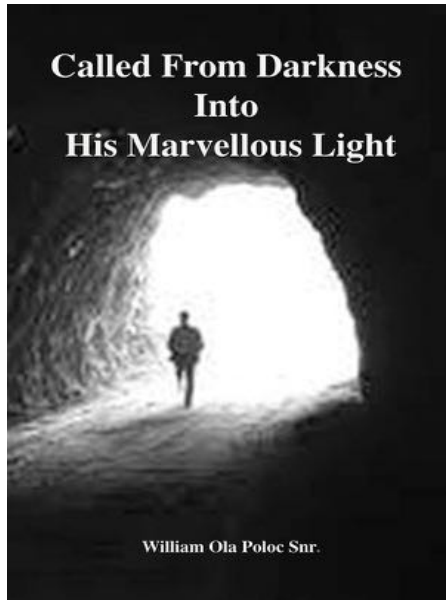
In a world increasingly shaped by cultural shifts and ideological pressure, the Church is not immune to confusion regarding gender roles and spiritual authority. In Eldership Is Male, David Clarke takes a bold, scriptural stand on one of the most controversial issues confronting the Church today: should women serve as elders?

Originally sparked by a real-life confrontation within his local church, Clarke documents his personal journey, correspondence, and theological reflections surrounding the attempt to appoint women as elders—an act he believes directly contradicts biblical teaching. Drawing from Scripture, historical context, and his own experiences, the author lays out a clear, uncompromising case for male eldership as designed by God and established by Christ through His apostles.

The alternative subtitle, Only a Woman Can Be Pregnant, serves as a provocative reminder of biological and biblical distinctions—truths increasingly denied or dismissed in both society and the Church.

This book is a clarion call for Christians to return to the authority of God's Word, resist the tide of modern compromise, and faithfully uphold the doctrines delivered once to the saints.

CALLED FROM DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT



William Poloc

William Poloc was once an inmate of New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines, having been sentenced to 14 years for the crime of homicide. Yet it was during his time in prison that the Lord Jesus Christ called him to repentance and faith. Turning his back on a life of sin, William began to read the Holy Scriptures and study theology. In time, he came to understand and embrace the doctrines of grace, and he was soon teaching the gospel to his fellow inmates.

I first met William in October 2001 while visiting New Bilibid Prison, where I was serving as Director of the Christian mission, Trojan Horse International.

Upon his release in August 2002, William was commissioned by Trojan Horse International and sent back to his home city of Baguio to preach the gospel to the inmates of Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail.

In October 2002, I travelled to Baguio City Jail in my capacity as Mission Director and as a sent minister of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists. There, I had the privilege of baptising 22 inmates

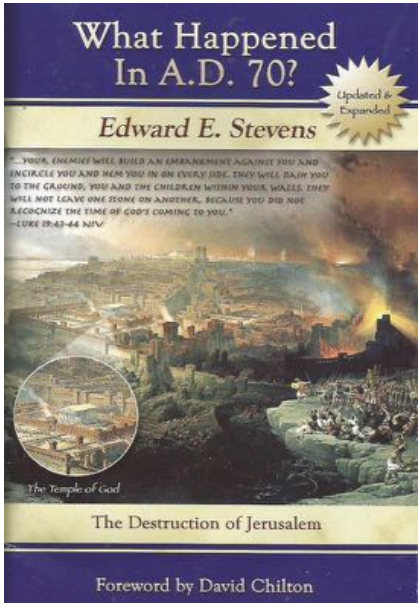
who had been truly converted—from crime to Christ—through the ministry of William Poloc. I also baptised a further 8 souls at Benguet Provincial Jail who likewise testified of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These remarkable events coincided with the final worship service ever held at the Bierton Strict Baptist Chapel in the United Kingdom, which took place on 22nd December 2002.

Over the past two decades, Brother William has faithfully laboured in the gospel ministry. As his testimony shows, he has continued to preach and teach the Word of God, and has established what is now known as the Baguio Christ-Centred Churches.

We give thanks to Almighty God for His wondrous works in the salvation of sinners, and for raising up faithful men like William Poloc, who proclaim the message that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15, KJV).

David Clarke
Director, Trojan Horse International
April 2022

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70



Ed. Stevens

This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have

found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a ***consistent view*** which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more ***conservative*** on most other issues than traditional views. And there is ***no compromise*** of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written {***audience relevance***). Two thousand yeas from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of "American English" to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the "donkeys and elephants" (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are "hard to understand" (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that ***the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them.*** It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.
Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christs and the inspired NT writings.

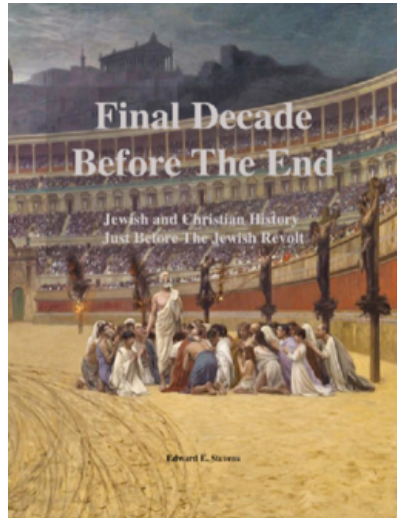
Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is "not of this world" and that it would "not come with observation." It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed ***futurist*** interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

"Preterist" simply means past in fulfillment It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and "search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true" You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read

April 17,2010

FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END



Ed. Stevens

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, First Century Events in Chronological Order. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his

various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to "teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the end-time prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those

last five years just before the Neronic persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the end-time events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of "tribulation" upon the church and the "days of vengeance" upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

Edward E. Stevens
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION
Bradford, Pennsylvania
April 17,2010